



*Isaac Watts D.D.
from an original painting.*

*Sketched by
Daisy J. Gordon.*

ISAAC WATTS' WORK IN HYMNOLOGY
WITH SPECIAL REGARD
TO ITS DERIVATIVE AND ORIGINAL FEATURES

By

HARRY ESCOTT,

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PREFACE

This is a study of the evolutionary, derivative, revolutionary and architectonic qualities of Isaac Watts' work in the field of Hymnology.

The roots of that work are buried, for the most part, in the hidden years of boyhood and youth, and have not been sufficiently explored. This is evinced by the fact that writers on Watts' renovation of psalmody have failed to notice that the language - reform and psalmodic ideals of the Royal Society - as expressed through the personality and works of men like John Wilkins - were formative factors of some importance.

In addition, the liturgical interests of Richard Baxter, as well as the school of hymnologists he may be said to have founded, exerted an influence upon Watts that has been largely overlooked.

Moreover, Watts' youth was passed in an atmosphere of intellectual freedom and experiment, which fitted him later - when the concrete situation arose - to make " a calculated and well-devised assault " upon the citadel of the despotic metrical psalm.

Horae Lyricae, Watts' first book of verse, is the seed-plot of his mature psalmody and hymnody. His work as a whole assumes the form of a growing organic system. This evolutionary characteristic has been missed, we think, for the want of fuller bibliographical research. And this deficiency is the fault of the otherwise excellent article in Julian , as it is also of Arthur Paul Davis' recent biography of the Hymn-writer.

Neither /

Neither of these scholars appears to have seen the original editions of the Lyrics and Hymns, each with its epoch-making preface.

Just one example of this bibliographical fogginess. In the course of research for this study of Watts, we enjoyed access to a library of growing distinction that professed to have a copy of the second edition of Hymns and Spiritual Songs. On examination, (the title-page was missing) the volume turned out to be a late eighteenth-century issue. The librarian was pleased to receive the correction of what he considered "a very grave error", and added -

" I cannot think how this mistake could have arisen in the first place; it just shows how little critical capacity exists since this book has actually been to exhibitions, where students of Isaac Watts and his works have examined it without comment."

Through the generosity of friends across the Atlantic, we have been fortunate to have recourse to these early editions, and by dint of ingenuity - enthusiastic if amateurish - we are able to give, partly in facsimile, interesting excerpts from these rare books, to illustrate the development and teaching of Watts' psalmodic reform. A considerable portion of the original research in this thesis is the gathering together, perhaps for the first time from the first editions, of the complete corpus of Isaac Watts' writings in prose and verse bearing on hymnology. These for easy reference, and because they were too bulky for inclusion in the text of the thesis, have been placed as an appendix in a separate volume.

Again /

Again, no writer so far has appreciated that A Guide to Prayer has useful light to throw upon some of Watts' hymnodic aims and ideals, especially in the matter of the proper language of psalmody.

We have tried to show in a general way, and then in considerable detail (chapter 9) , the derivative features of Watts' work, by a thorough examination of the religious verse and hymn-experiments of the seventeenth century, and by a first-hand perusal of contemporary literature on the theme of psalmody.

This method of treatment has not been without its rewards, as will be seen, for example, in chapter 8 which deals with Watts' Divine Songs for children. There is truth, we believe, in the dictum that Watts gave to his age in a golden flood what he had first received in dismal vapour. There are indeed many derivative features in his work, but the epithets are more significant than the nouns in our modified dictum.

Watts' originality, it is suggested, should be looked for in two directions:-

(1) In the dauntless and rebellious power of his mind, and its clear exposition of the philosophy underlying the worship-song of the Christian Church. It seems to us, moreover, that his psalmodic revolution was part of a larger liturgical reform, and that his originality is revealed more in the wide sweep of his reforming purpose than in the individual items of his work. Of course there are exceptions, instances when he snaps his self-forged fetters and soars with lyrical inspiration into the empyrean, leaving /

leaving his predecessors far behind by the power and relevancy of his verse. In these moments Watts is not only the author but the perfecter too of the modern English Hymn, as the Church has come to conceive of it.

(2) Watts shows his originality also by what we call in this thesis the architectonic quality of his work. He invariably wrought from a diagram. He possessed the kind of mind that needs a blue-print of some sort. And he was able to give to the churches "a prayer-book without forms", and a serviceable hymn-book provided with useful indices, because of the schematic cast of his thought. Nor is this love of system confined to the scaffolding of his work as a whole: it is carried over into every item almost of his hymnody; and is achieved, in part, by a variety of metrical and literary devices, partly by the use of a system of liturgical patterns (chapter 9). Thus the hymns of Watts even at their lyrical highest, are the work of a poet who, strangely enough, was a logician as well.

Finally, in a short Postscript we have attempted to evaluate the liturgical, literary, theological and historical importance of Isaac Watts' contribution to Church Praise.

It should be added that our main interest in this study has not been the isolated items of Watts' Lyrics, Psalms, and Hymns, but his hymnological work as a whole. Our concern has been to present Watts as the pioneer of English Hymnological Science. Accordingly this thesis is to some extent a study of the beginnings of the history and science of the Modern English Hymn.

NOTE

Notes and comments, indicated in the text of the thesis by small figures, will be found at the end of each chapter.

An Appendix of Watts' writings on hymnology is given in a separate volume.

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The derivative features of Watts' work mentioned above are here gathered together. Specific borrowings are listed in detail. And the conclusion is reached that, so far as content and theme are concerned, Watts cannot be regarded as an original writer.

Where, then, does his originality lie? In the manipulation of his material - in his clear sense of structure and system - in the liturgical and literary patterns of his hymns - and in his sure grasp of the philosophy behind Christian praise. Watts has been said to have formed a SYSTEM OF PRAISE. A caveat is needed: we are not justified in thinking of this system in mechanical or authoritarian terms. Watts initiated a growing organism of praise, in which every kind of psalmody that he produced coheres and is organically related. This conception of his work has important and far-reaching consequences.

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CHAPTER 1THE HIDDEN YEARS: FORMATIVE INFLUENCES AND INTERESTS

In spite of feeble health, which doubtless strengthened a natural disposition to live "in...daily Views of a future World", Isaac Watts reached his seventy-fourth year, and was writing books or publishing them, to the end. But as a writer of hymns he may be said to have died thirty years earlier. His significant work in hymnology was not done by Dr. Watts at all, but by young Mr. Watts. His first contribution appeared in print in December, 1705, when he was slightly over thirty-one years of age, and his last (excluding three little groups of sermonic hymns, 1721-29, which added nothing new), at the beginning of 1719, before his forty-fifth birthday. Only a few of the psalms and hymns bear a date, but that some were written in youthful years is attested by Hymn 92, Book 2 of Hymns and Spiritual Songs, which the author tells us was "composed the 5th November, 1694". Watts' reform of Psalmody assumes the mark of genius/

genius when seen, in conception at least, as the achievement of youth. This reminder of the early blossoming of Watts' powers is valuable to the student of his work, as it suggests that its affiliations are as much, if not more, with the seventeenth as with the eighteenth century. A discerning critic like Leslie Stephen¹ thinks that Watts represents older methods of thought and expression rather than any fresh development. Were we concerned here with the "venerable Dr. Watts", ruling with regal if gentle sway the life of English and American Nonconformity in the middle years of the eighteenth century, our task would be much easier to perform. There is no lack of material relating to the philosophical thought and religious controversies of that arid period of English life; and all the biographies give perhaps an undue prominence to these matters. They seem to forget that Watts is first and foremost the pioneer English Hymnographer, and not a significant philosopher, or writer of ecclesiastic and religious polemic. Nor is he, as his latest critics seem to think, of importance chiefly for reasons of literary history. Of the young Mr. Watts, student and recluse, the Lives are comparatively reticent, and perhaps there is little new to be gleaned about his boyhood and youth at this late date. And yet the seed, which was soon to spring forth and burgeon into a unique kind of English worship-song, was sown/

3.

sown in the soil of those hidden years, not growing to maturity immediately, but evolving steadily, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear", and owing as much to the crosswinds of life over and around it, as to the nature of the ground in which it first germinated.

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to explore chiefly the milieu of these formative years in the life of young Watts, selecting for brief consideration a few of the factors which influenced him, and bore directly or indirectly, upon his later hymnological work.

1.

Isaac Watts was born at Southampton 17th July, 1674, of solid Puritan stock on both sides, a child of the traditional Puritanism which accorded a high place to intellectual achievement. His mother, a daughter of Alderman Taunton, was of Huguenot descent, and mingled in her blood were the love of freedom and the joy of religious song. His father, also named Isaac, was an oft-persecuted deacon of an Independent Meeting-house in the town, who for some time kept a school at Little St. Dennis in French Street. The elder Watts was an enthusiastic classicist and a religious versifier. Verses of his were wrongly attributed to his son in The Posthumous Works of the late Reverend and Learned Isaac Watts, D.D., published in 1779. The young/

young Watts' paternal grandfather, Thomas Watts, who had served as a naval officer under Admiral Blake, and had lost his life in the war with the Dutch in 1656, was a connoisseur of art and poetry. In a poem which Isaac wrote on the occasion of his grandmother Watts' death, 13th July, 1693, which was included in the 2nd edition of Horae Lyricae, 1709, the young poet speaks proudly of his grandfather's gifts as painter, musician and christian lyricist. Born and nurtured in such a family, Isaac would undoubtedly have the encouragement of his mother and father in his early classical and literary studies, as he did later on in his first attempts at the congregational hymn.

In a curious autobiographical table of the chief incidents in his life, he writes, "Began to Learn Latin of my Father....1678".² That the elder Watts had received a classical education is evinced by his Sum Book, first referred to by Wright:

'Most of the spaces unused for arithmetic are occupied by aphorisms and lengthy citations from Latin authors, including the story of Pyramus and Thisbe from Ovid's Metamorphoses. This book with its large and ornamental initial letters, some of which are coloured, and its scraps of original verse, bears witness not only to the neatness and orderliness of the writer, who was then...a boy of 13, but also to the fact that like his father and more gifted son, he had a passion for poetry and a taste for art.'³

It is interesting to notice that it was the elder Watts who first encouraged his son to write a hymn for a specific congregation. It seems certain that like Milton and Crashaw, and other poets before and/

and since his time, Isaac Watts began to climb the lower steep of Parnassus in his father's house.

Isaac Watts was born in the year that John Milton died. But there is something more than a chronological relation between the two Puritan writers. They present similarities in upbringing, training, and conception of poetic vocation. Bernard Manning in his masterly little book on Watts and Wesley mentions the former writer's indebtedness to Milton for his poetic use of names, certain felicities of expression, and some characteristics of theological outlook.⁴ That Watts was a careful student of Milton's poetry must be clear to anyone with a working knowledge of English literature who reads the younger poet's Lyrics and Hymns. Watts owed not a little of his metrical dexterity to the study of Milton, and there are echoes of the greater poet in Watts' Lyrics and essays on blank verse, though he is not uncritical on occasion of his great master's methods and language.⁵

There are verses in Watts' Horae that remind the reader of Lycidas, and lyrical moods based unmistakably on L'Allegro and Il Penseroso; even the Hymns are not exempt from Miltonic influence, infused as they are at times with the spaciousness and sublimity of the great Puritan poet, occasionally adopting some aspect of the form and machinery of the epic, or reflecting Paradise Lost in their oft-recurring theme of the fall of the Angels.⁶ Milton's Latin Poems were perhaps the model of Watts' in Horae Lyricae. The Elegia Quarta "Ad Thomam Junium, praeceptorem suum" was written by the/

the elder poet when 18. Watts' corresponding eulogy "Ad Reverendum Virum Dom. Johannem Pinhorne"⁷ was composed in 1694, when he was 20. Like Milton, Watts also writes verse epistles prefaced by remarks in prose, and epigrammata and epitaphs.

But it was not solely as a poet that Milton influenced young Watts. It is probable that Watts, moving in the milieu of a puritan religious and intellectual aristocracy, read at an early date, almost certainly in the home of the Hartopps,⁸ the prose tractates of John Milton, discovering in them (particularly in those dealing with themes like individual freedom, education, England's spiritual leadership, and Christianity's abrogation of the Old Dispensation), expressions of his own views. Reading Watts' Prefaces and Milton's tractates side by side, we discern a similarity of outlook in the two puritan champions; in their rebellious stance against papal and intellectual tyranny, or the despotism of mere custom, in their sometimes irrational pride in England's cultural heritage or spiritual hegemony, in their opinion of the supremacy of Biblical over pagan poetry, and their conviction that the poet's work is a divine vocation.⁹

There is also a psychological affinity between the two. Both were conscious of a poetic vocation, and held together precariously (Watts infinitely more precariously than Milton), the humanism of the renaissance and the puritan spirit of the reformation. Both were born and bred in puritan homes, suckled in the love of liberty, encircled/

encircled by the finest traditions of literature and culture. Each received a classical education. Each lisped early in numbers. And the two of them, after an academic training, came back to the paternal roof for study and meditation, to prepare them to find their place in the world, and the character of their vocation as artists - though this word needs to be used guardedly with reference to the work of Watts. There the arresting and not unfruitful parallel ends.

Milton, before he really found himself as a creative artist, was sucked into the vortex of the politico-religious conflicts of mid-seventeenth England; and when he had the requisite leisure and outward ease to write the poem which he believed God had sent him into the world to produce, it was coloured by the social and personal struggles of a disturbed and, in some ways even agonized, middle-life, and like a glass in the House of Mirrors reflects many a distorted image of the Truth from that unquiet and unstable period of English history. How different it was in the case of Watts and his magnum opus, The Psalms of David Imitated. This had been conceived in the comparatively halcyon days of youth and early manhood, written for the most part in the seclusion of old country houses, ere the demonic force of the Deistic and Arian controversies had shattered the unity and peace of the Church, and before Watts himself was called upon to do meek battle in the religious quarrels of the age. Providential it was for the Church that this was so. This early flowering of Watts' work in hymnology bequeathed to the rationalistic eighteenth century/

century a tuneful system of reformed theology, leavened by the milder spirit of seventeenth-century Anglican poetry. Had Watts, like Milton, composed his opus at a later date, it is doubtful whether his contribution to the praise of all the churches could have been so splendidly catholic and orthodox.

II.

"To Latin School.....1680" - so Watts writes in his Memorable Affairs in my Life. With some proficiency in the latin language and the beginning of a lyrical gift, he went at the age of six to King Edward VI School, Southampton. The Headmaster was the Reverend^e John Pinhorne, who was also the rector of All Saints Church. From a latin ode¹⁰ which Watts addressed to him, and from references to classical studies in Watts' later writings, we gather that Pinhorne was a man of considerable learning, who possessed also the rarer gift of imparting his knowledge and enthusiasm. Under his supervision, the young student read Homer, Pinder, Sophocles, Plato, Virgil, Horace, Juvenal, Persius and Seneca, and the neo-latin poets, George Buchanan and Casimire Sarbiewski. Seemingly the schoolmaster took John Norris's moralistic attitude to the classics; and permitted the reading of Horace and Juvenal only in expurgated texts, while Martial, Ovid and Catullus were considered to be out of bounds.

Watts stayed at the Latin School, according to his Memorandum, till/

till 1690, and in that same quaint and interesting document are the following items, which the painfully self-conscious student thought worthy of perpetuating:

"Was Propositor of ye Latin School.....	1683
Began to Learn Greek.....	1683 or before.
Had ye Small Pox.....	1683
Learnt French.....	1684, 1685.
Learnt Hebrew.....	1687 or 8.
Fell under Considerable Convictions of sin...	1688
And was taught to trust in Christ, I hope....	1689
Had a great and dangerous Sickness.....	1689"

These entries indicate the widening sweep of his linguistic attainments, the early dedication of his life to Christ, and the commencement of those bodily infirmities which, under God, were to be used to give to the Church of all ages a supreme "Poet of the Sanctuary".

In all probability Watts' early experiments in latin verse were made at King Edward VI School. Classical prosody was usually included in the curricula of the Grammar Schools; and a schoolmaster of resource, as Pinhorne appears to be, would encourage a young enthusiast in this field. Nor is it likely that Isaac's developing lyrical gift and growing interest in English prosody would be overlooked. The British Museum lists among its Wattiana The English Parnassus: or a helpe to English Poesie, etc., by Joshua Poole, London, 1657, with the claim that this particular copy of the book belonged to Isaac Watts as a school-boy, and that the words pencilled in the margins were written by him. The evidence for associating this volume with the boy Watts is no longer accessible; but there must/

must have been some now untraceable reason for the claim. It is known that the late decades of the seventeenth century, permeated with the temper of the new philosophy, revealed an interest in the mechanics of English versification, and produced some popular exponents of the science of prosody. Of these Edward Bysshe was the most influential: his Art of English Poetry (1702) was so popular that it reached a ninth and enlarged edition in 1762. Poole's book seems to have been a pioneer treatise in this field, and it is possible that Isaac Watts, already an ardent versifier, came across it and other books on the same theme in his school days. Its Proeme in verse, with its insistence that the gift of poesie should be laid on the altar of moral and spiritual truth, is echoed in Watts' first Preface. A short dictionary of rhymes at the beginning of the book shows that some of Watts' 'bad' rhymes were permissible when he wrote them, and its anthology of "felicitous expressions garnered from the treasures of the older English poets" substantiates the claim made above, that Watts' poetic affiliations, in his earlier work at least, were with the seventeenth century.

It has been said, with some truth, that the halo of sanctity is a literary disadvantage.¹¹ Watts' poetic and prosodic significance has undoubtedly been hidden by our readiness to dress him solely in the singing robes of the Church. We forget that he was the first English hymn-writer of catholic importance because he was a/
a/

a poet and pioneer prosodist as well. He brought to the task of hymnography a lyrical disposition united with a wide knowledge of the science of prosody, and considerable skill in the craft of versification. George Saintsbury, a scholar more repelled than attracted by evangelicalism, regards Watts as one of the chief prosodists of the eighteenth century.¹² He speaks in praise of his blank verse, mentioning its artfulness and variety. Even his examples of "Pindaric eccentricity" with which his first book, Horae Lyricae, unfortunately abounds are "far from technically ineffective". It is not any defect of versification that makes Watts' Pindarics sometimes absurd, but their subjects. The Moral Songs, Saintsbury adds, may be at times goody and platitudinous, but prosodically they are very early and very deft. In a poem like Good Resolutions the trochees are most cleverly handled, and the postponement of the full line to the second place, instead of the commoner arrangement of giving it the first, is excellent. The great literary scholar is slightly patronising when he applies aesthetic and literary canons to Watts' Hymns. No doubt their evangelic, not to say their Calvinist content put him out more than a little. Yet despite prejudice, he cannot in honesty hold back a meed of appreciation. Speaking of the Hymns, he says that they are in the three great recognised measures, but the handling of the familiar descants is far from despicable. The later poet who sang,

The dogs, and the birds, and the little busy bee -
O! its all sing-song in the Watts countree!

was not fair to Watts. In the lesser known hymns, Saintsbury thinks the common measure keeps its stateliness; the long, its grave and rolling flow; the short, that quaint variety which, at its rare best is irresistible. To appreciate fully the prosodic acumen of Watts' hymnody we need only look at the anarchic versification of Sternhold and Hopkins, which, be it remembered, was the staple of Church praise in England when Watts began his reform.

Saintsbury is more reliable and authoritative when he shines his torch of criticism on Watts' Lyrics. In these his prosodic power and range are best seen. They display his versatility and craftsmanship. V. de Sola Pinto in a perhaps too laudatory study of Watts, mentions also his experiments with classical metres in English verse,¹³ and calls him a 'nonconformist' in metre.¹⁴

If not a pioneer, the young Watts was at least a versatile and successful experimenter in English prosody, and we must guard against the temptation of the philistine to pooh-pooh the necessity for prosodic experience in a hymn-writer, confined as he is to a few simple verse patterns. Watts' adoption of the metrical psalm-stanza, with all its limitations, is redeemed from monotony and banality, which were too often the marks of church verse written before his time, by his skilful if circumscribed use of that prosodic knowledge he so richly possessed.

III

"Left ye grammar School and Came to London to Mr. Rowe,
to study Phil. 1690".¹⁵

The four years spent at Newington Green Academy, 1690-94, had an emancipating effect upon the mind of Watts.¹⁶ It was the successor of an earlier institution where Daniel Defoe had studied sixteen years previously, and was marked by a realistic and liberal attitude to education. The Head of the Academy during Watts' studentship was the Reverend Thomas Rowe, the son of one of Cromwell's chaplains, and the minister of a church of Independents meeting in Girdlers' Hall, Basinghall Street.¹⁷ In later years, Watts praised his tutor in the poem Free Philosophy,¹⁸ which not only suggests the happy relationship which existed between students and teacher, but catches something of the spirit of intellectual freedom which characterised this school of sacred scholarship:

I love thy gentle Influence, Rowe,
Thy gentle Influence like the Sun
Only dissolves the frozen Snow,
Then bids our Thoughts like Rivers flow,
And chuse the Channels where they run.

In religious matters Rowe was a doctrinal Calvinist, but he had a mind free from the shackles of party and averse to all impositions in spiritual concerns.¹⁹ He allowed his students unlimited freedom of enquiry. In a letter addressed by young Watts to an unknown correspondent with the pseudonym Pocyon, the free atmosphere of the academy/

academy and the liberal influence of its Principal are clearly perceived:

"...when I have given my thoughts a loose, and let them rove without confinement, sometimes I seem to have carried reason with me even to the camp of Socinus; but then St. John gives my soul a twitch and St. Paul bears me back again....almost to the tents of John Calvin." Works of Isaac Watts (1753) Vol.IV.532 .

In such an intellectual atmosphere it is not surprising that the spirit of rebellion, which to some extent was present in the boyhood scribblings of Watts, grew and became strong.²⁰ The years under Rowe's guidance contributed a very great deal to the mental and spiritual equipment of the future hymnologist. But it would be a mistake to imagine, that in this academy Watts found those contacts with ordinary folk and representative congregations, that are required by any one who would write, with success, the hymns of the people. Newington at this time was a village encircled by cornfields, its great houses mostly inhabited by London's merchants, and members of the learned aristocracy of Puritanism. These were the people Watts met in his student days, and afterwards in the capacity of tutor and pastor of a city church, he moved almost habitually amongst the same elite of Puritanism. They constituted a stately and learned society pervaded with the memories of the great personalities of the Civil War and the Protectorate. The almost arrogant patriotism of much of Watts' verse reflects the temper of this society.²¹ This puritan aristocracy had little if anything, in common with the democratic/

democratic puritanism of John Bunyan, with its intense and narrow bibliolatry and intolerance; or with the subsequent evangelical forms of Dissent with their emotional appeal to the multitude. Its religion was that of men of wealth, rank and learning; and these acquisitions, material and mental alike, were conceived as signs and seals of the favour of God. It would not be just, however, to speak of its religion as completely private and self-regarding. Often it issued in acts of philanthropy and benevolence, but even in its social manifestations there is a tinge of patronage and condescension. The occasional 'priggishness' of Watts' hymns, especially those written for children, reflects, not so much his own spiritual pride, as the hubris of a society of successful and well-favoured 'Saints'. It was, moreover, a secluded society. It maintained itself in dignified isolation in old country houses, educating its sons, either privately or in dissenting academies, and supporting the Whig party in Parliament.

At the Academy Watts enjoyed the friendship of a small circle of littérateurs. Three of his fellow-students along with himself formed a sort of Mutual Improvement Society. They were Josiah Hort, who later conformed, and eventually became Archbishop of Tuam; John Hughes, author of the Siege of Damascus, and contributor to the Spectator, the Guardian and the Tatler; and Samuel Say, friend of Watts' boyhood at Southampton, student of Milton's prosody and an experimenter/

experimenter in metrical psalmody, who later became the minister of Westminster Chapel. The four were drawn together by kindred tastes, chiefly by a common admiration for English poetry and the classics.⁸²

After their student days they kept in touch with one another, and some of their letters are still extant.⁸³ Watts had less affinity with the ambitious and secular-minded Hughes than with the other two. William Dunscombe, Hughes' brother-in-law and the editor of his Poems, wrote to Watts in October, 1734, requesting his reminiscences of Hughes during their student days at Newington Academy, and enclosing a ticket for a complimentary copy of the book about to be published. Watts' reply, 1st Nov. 1734, is interesting:

"My acquaintance and intimacy with that ingenious gentleman was in the younger years of life, chiefly; our later situations in the world divided us so often to prevent frequent conversation, though not to destroy mutual esteem... But a man of my character must not too much indulge what relates to the modern stage (Dunscombe had apparently enclosed an English verse translation of Racine's Athaliah) because of its vicious entertainments. It is my opinion that dramatic poesy might have been useful to many happy purposes, had it always been kept within the bounds prescribed by virtue and religion. But as you say from Horace concerning yourself....so I must say, at least since my last published Miscellanies,⁸⁴ Nunc itaque et versus et caetera ludicra pono."

Earlier on, Watts confesses that Dunscombe's enquiries have revived memories of youth and some "buried ideas", but now he adds,

"...eternity lies before me, and appears in a much nearer view. May I be found ready for the important summons."

Two matters of interest emerge from this letter: Watts' puritan distaste for the secular spirit which pervades the greater part/

part of Hughes' verse, and a feeling almost of guilt that his own early years had been spent with the toys and baubles of verse-making. The reference to "buried ideas" suggests that there was a time when poetry had usurped too large a place in Watts' heart and affections. But up to the date of this letter, at least, Watts had not entirely 'broken' with the Muse, despite his bouts of puritan conscience. He always had a sneaking regard for Helicon - and the Helicon of these early Newington days.

The same attitude is shown to Hughes in a second letter to Dunscombe dated Newington, 23rd May, 1735.²⁵ Watts, always an exuberant bibliophile, had just received the promised copy of Hughes' works, and begins in a more appreciative and sprightly ^evain:

"Methinks I see the very man, my old acquaintance there with his temper and softness, his wit and sprightly genius, spreading almost over every page....."

There his puritan conscience arrests him in his eulogy:

"My sorrow freshens and renews upon my heart, that such a genius did not live to write more moral and divine odes in advanced years, to be a counterpart to all the charms of pleasure and youth and beauty which his younger poesy indulged".

Then he repeats the theme of his own Preface to Horae Lyricae:

"The Christian scheme has glories and beauties in it, which have superior power to touch the soul, beyond all the gods and heroes of the heathen heaven or elysian. I should have been much pleased to see so find a pen employing its art on such themes."

But Watts does not forget to praise the verse that Hughes had written/

written in youthful days on religious and moral subjects, namely, his odes the Creator of the World and the Ecstasy, both perhaps influenced by John Norris.²⁶ He had read these, possibly in manuscript years gone by, and they had exercised a considerable influence on his own Christian lyrics. It is pleasant to think that it was John Hughes who introduced Watts to Norris' Collection of Miscellanies, with its interesting preface on religious and moral poetry which lay at Watts' elbow as he performed his early labours with the Christian lyric.²⁷

Another member of the circle took the same attitude to Hughes. Samuel Say in a letter to him dated 11th January, 1699, ends with the words:

"In all times and in all places of the world, the moral poets have been ever the greatest, and as much superior to others in wit as in virtue. Nor does this seem difficult to be accounted for, since the dignity of their subjects naturally raised their ideas, and gave a grandeur to their sentiments".²⁸

The passage might have been written by Watts himself. Say also expresses a preference for Milton and the older English poets, to Dryden and the moderns.

But to return to Hughes. His influence on Watts was not insignificant. Literary duels, it is true, frequently took place between the two friends. Hughes formed a more balanced estimate of Watts' infatuation for the Polish neo-latin poet Matthew Casimire Sarbiewski.²⁹ A keen student of Dryden and a devotee of the modern style in verse, Hughes was more awake to the Polish writer's defects, and/

and particularly to the ill-government of his fancy. It was due possibly to his criticism of his friend's poetic 'calf-love' (together with the influence of John Wilkins, and the language ideals of the Royal Society to be mentioned later), that Watts eventually found his real affinity, not with Casimire and Pindar, but with the simplicity, economy and directness of the metrical psalm-stanza. Though he never altogether forsook his first love.

The most influential of the three friends upon Watts' development as a poet, and perhaps as a psalmodist too, was Samuel Say.

"He was a kind of smaller Watts, a man of large and varied knowledge in the classics, mathematics, astronomy, and natural philosophy." 30

Hughes and Watts looked up to him as an authority on classical and English verse, and submitted to his criticism. We find the former writing to him 6th November, 1697, enclosing an imitation of an ode of Horace, and adding the encomium:

".....I cannot without ingratitude omit this occasion of owning, that if I have yet attained any true taste of him (i.e., Horace) it is in a great measure owing to your judicious conversation, of which I am now so unhappily deprived." 31

In the same letter he says,

"I should be very glad if in your next you will tell me the faults I have committed; for it is the first time I have attempted the Pindarical way...."

Say is regarded, as early as 1697, as an authority on the Pindaric and the Imitation - two verse conventions which Watts himself used, the latter with masterly success and historical importance. In a subsequent letter to Say, with the date 26th December, 1703, Hughes again/

again sends verse for his appraisal and correction:

"If it fails giving you any entertainment, I will readily acknowledge it to be my own fault; for I know you to be master of so much sense, so good a taste, and such just notions of human life, that I am sure Horace must please you, if he be not murdered in an ill translation." ³²

Watts too, regarded Say as a man of good sense and taste, and submitted to his criticism his first book of poems, and most probably the first edition of his Hymns. Many of the alterations in the second edition of the former (and there was a considerable number improved by the changes) were due to his friend's criticism.

Watts' friendship with Say was of long standing, and of the heart as well as the mind. Samuel's father, the Rev. Giles Say, had been ejected from St. Michaels, Southampton, in 1662, and together with the elder Isaac Watts, had suffered ostracism and persecution for his religious principles. ³³ The Says and the Watts were thus brought very close together by the fellowship of suffering. Besides, the two boys were by blood connected with the historic persecution of the Huguenots. ³⁴ They had known each other in Southampton and probably attended the Grammar School together. ³⁵ Samuel was a year younger than Isaac and entered Stoke Newington Academy about 1692. ³⁶ His college course completed, he became chaplain to Thomas Scott of Liminge, Kent, and afterwards held pastorates at Andover, Yarmouth and Lowestoft. For nine years he was co-pastor with Thomas Baxter at Ipswich, and from there was called, at Watts' recommendation, to succeed Dr. Edmund Calamy at Westminster Chapel. He died in 1743 in/

in his sixty-eighth year.³⁷

Say's literary remains were edited by William Dunscombe in 1745, who, in his introduction writes:

"....he....had a taste for Music and Poetry, and was a good critic and master of the Classics".³⁸

Thomas Gibbons speaks in high praise of Say's work on the prosody of Milton. Whoever peruses his essays on this subject, he thinks,

"will learn what beauties arise from numbers, and how much they contribute to fine composition, and be convinced that Milton's happy management of his pauses, and his infusion of Spondees, Trochees, and Dactyls with the Iambics of an English verse, as his subjects and descriptions required, are among the distinguishing glories of his poem".³⁹

It was Gibbons' opinion that Say was a pioneer in this kind of prosodic analysis, and that others have since "picked his brains", without acknowledging to whom they were indebted. Watts, like Hughes owed a life-long interest in Horace and Milton to Samuel Say, and probably his experiments in discarded lyrical metres in Horae Lyricae were inspired by Say's "judicious conversation".

Say was an ardent believer in the right of the moral and spiritual to have full control of the art of poetry. In a letter to Hughes, dated 23 March, 1702, he says he has decided to dedicate his poetry to God alone.⁴⁰ His influence in this respect is seen in Watts' first book, the main idea of which must have been conceived, and a great part of its contents written during his student days.⁴¹

But it would appear also that Say was experimenting with metrical psalmody, probably while at Newington. Irene Parker in her/

her scholarly study Dissenting Academies in England refers to Sheriffhales Academy, 1663-97, where the students "set psalms to two or three tunes (or metres)". The last sentence is ambiguous. Does it mean that this academy, so practical and realistic in training and outlook, encouraged its students to try to improve the Church's psalmody? Be that as it may; it is interesting to note in a letter from Hughes to Say, in 1697, that the latter was trying his hand at paraphrasing a few psalms:

"I give you my hearty thanks for your ingenious paraphrase, in which you have so generously rescued the noble Psalmist out of the butcherly hands of Hopkins and Sternhold." ⁴²

It is not unlikely that Say, Watts and Hughes had discussed the reform of psalmody in their literary gatherings at Stoke Newington. Perhaps Watts' Essay on a few of David's Psalms, included in the first edition of Horae Lyricae, 1705, and which became the basis of his epoch-making volume The Psalms of David Imitated, 1719, goes back to this early period of psalmodic reform. ⁴³ Say's interest in psalmody is further evinced in a letter to Watts in 1728. In reply, Watts thanks him for some notes on Psalm 2, and a translation of part of Psalm 16, and adds:

"---in my opinion, the Psalms ought to be translated in such a manner for Christian worship, in order to show the hidden glories of that divine poesy." ⁴⁴

One of the most valuable Wattiana discovered in recent years is a letter written by Watts to Say, on the fly-leaf of a copy of the first/

first edition of Horae Lyricae, which reads:

"To Mr. Sam. Say. Dear Sir, Accept of this first labor of the press, this ventrous Essay of Poesie in so Nice and censorious an Age: forgive as you read, peruse as a friend, design to be pleased and not to Judge. And if you can (without too much abuse of your Judgement) here a line has been erased. You will help to free me from some obligations under wch ye Bookseller has put ye

Timorous Author, Your friend ⁴⁵
I. WATTS.

Decr. 28th 1705."

This letter not only settles for good the date of the publication of Watts' Lyrics, but suggests that their author had a great esteem for the critical acumen of his fellow-student and townsman.

Samuel Say was no small edition of Isaac Watts in those formative years. He was rather the master influence in that quaternian of lovers of the Muse. Temperamentally, Say was no match for the ambitious John Hughes, or his mildly aggressive and rebellious friend Isaac Watts. His own diffidence has hidden him in the mists of the years. Yet how many a taper he must have lighted on the altar of Watts' heart and mind!

At Thomas Rowe's Academy Isaac Watts and his circle came under the influence of the language reform promulgated by the Royal Society.⁴⁶ W.T. Whitley says:

"It is probable that Watts....had studied the principles of rhetoric laid down by Thomas Sprat, and fathered by him on the Royal Society. Objecting to high-flown style he says that the Fellows aim at 'a close, naked, natural way of speaking..preferring the language of artisans, countrymen and merchants before that of wits and scholars.' If to an F.R.S. this was a discipline, it was natural to Watts and his circle; and he quite deliberately carried it into his verse." ⁴⁷

Undoubtedly Watts emulated this style in prose. In his Remnants of/

of Time, published in 1740, Watts has an imitation of a few lines of Horace's Ars Poetica, which perhaps reveals the influence upon his verse of the language ideals of the Royal Society:

Smooth be your style, and plain and natural,
To strike the sons of Wapping or Whitehall:
While others think this easy to attain
Let them but try, and with their utmost pain
They'll sweat and strive to imitate in vain.

He is careful to suggest that this was not his "natural" style in poetry: he reached it only after much mental sweat and discipline. Moreover, these verses are late and do not represent Watts' ideas about language when he was writing his early lyrics. The reader of Horae Lyricae would hardly be prepared to say with Whitley that "the language of artisans, countrymen and merchants" was "natural to Watts." He was more at home with the soaring expressions of Casimire, and the seventeenth-century English devotional poets with their metaphysical conceits, than with the language of ordinary men. It was the later discipline of writing hymns for a definite congregation of lowly folk that converted Watts to a simpler and less airy kind of style and versification. Nor was this conversion an easy and painless matter. It entailed a sort of artistic kenosis. Watts had to lay his poetic glories aside, and dress the profound message of the Gospel in the homespun verse and language of the common people. It was only when Watts turned from lyric to hymn that he whole-heartedly and completely adopted the language ideals of the Royal Society.

Watts and his friends felt the impact of the ideas of the Royal/

Royal Society chiefly through the personality and works of John Wilkins.⁴⁸

The immediate predecessor of Thomas Rowe's Academy was opened about 1667 by Charles Morton at Newington Green. Two of its famous alumni speak of Morton's great erudition, and of the wide sweep of the curriculum, making particular reference to its scientific content.⁴⁹ Morton was a fellow of Wadham College, Oxford, and a good mathematician. While in residence there he had won the friendship of the warden, Dr. Wilkins, one of the great figures of the Royal Society, whom some regard as its real founder. Morton later introduced into the education of the dissenting academies which came under his influence, the principles of that Society which he had learnt from Wilkins, mainly its encouragement of experiment carried through in an atmosphere of intellectual freedom. Thomas Rowe shared these ideas and taught them to his students in the Academy at Stoke Newington.

Rowe used books by Wilkins in his tutorial work. The Catalogue of the Sale of Dr. Watts' manuscripts at Bradwell, 18th March, 1835, lists as item 130:

Wilkins (Bishop), Ecclesiastes: or a Discourse on Preaching, 1693.

This volume contains the Autograph "E Libris Isa. Watts" with extensive remarks in Watts' handwriting, "on the names of authors and their writings...chiefly taken from Mr. Thos. Rowe his tutor, in conversation and the rest "made in reading books in his youngest years of study."⁵⁰

E. Paxton Hood/

E. Paxton Hood, in his *Life of Watts*, mentions this book and says that the copy

"bears every internal evidence of being the property of Dr. Watts: it is interleaved, and in addition to the varied and singular learning of the book itself, in the handwriting of the Doctor there is a perfect storehouse of references, exhibiting the amazing world of knowledge over which his mind travelled; and not merely references, but frequently some condensed expression of sentiment and opinion."⁵¹

But evidence is also at hand in Watts' own writings of his admiration of and indebtedness to John Wilkins. A Guide to Prayer, etc. (1715) owes its form and a considerable part of its contents to a treatise on prayer by Wilkins, A Discourse concerning the Gift of Prayer; showing what it is, wherein it consists, and how far it is attainable by industry (1653). In the Preface, Watts writes:

"It is not necessary to inform the World that Bishop Wilkins, in his Discourse of the Gift of Prayer, has been my chief Assistant toward the second Chapter of this Book."

In the body of the book he quotes freely from Wilkins.

Edmund Gosse is the only writer we have come across who has at all appreciated the supreme place occupied by Wilkins in the reform of language advocated by the men of the Royal Society. He writes:

"...his style deserves great praise. His sentences are short, pointed, and exact. He has little or nothing of the redundant languor of his contemporaries; and justice has never been done to him as a pioneer in English prose. The praise given to Tillotson belongs properly to Wilkins, for Tillotson lived a generation later, and learned to write English from his study of the Bishop of Chester, whom he enthusiastically admired."⁵²

It was Wilkins' influence chiefly that made Watts a reformer of the/

the language of puritan preaching, prayer and praise.

The men of the Royal Society were interested also in the reform of psalmody. As early as 1667, Sam. Woodford writes in the Preface of his Paraphrase upon the Psalms of David:

"I promise my self great assistance by the unwearied and most successful labours of The Royal Society; which seems to be rais'd in this last age, not only for the improvement of Natural Philosophy in the general, but amidst the invention of new, for the restauration of decay'd Arts, and amongst them all of none more than this of serious, profitable, and sober Poesy".

In the same Preface there are references to Thomas Sprat (p.16), Abraham Cowley (p.11,13) and John Wilkins (p.17), who was at that time Dean of Ripon. It was through Wilkins' mediation that Woodford gained access to the manuscript version of the paraphrase of the Psalms by Sir Philip Sidney and his sister the Countess of Pembroke. Wilkins, says Woodford,

"..is one to whom all good learning of what kind soever it be, must remain perpetually indebted."

Sir John Denham, to whose work in psalmody Watts expresses his indebtedness,⁵⁸ wrote A Version of the Psalms of David which was published posthumously in 1714, though it must have been compiled before 1668, the year of Denham's death. On page XXI of the Preface he tells us that Wilkins, then Bishop of Chester, sponsored his version, which was written for Church use, to outmode and outsing the beggarly translation of Sternhold and Hopkins. Writing more specifically of Wilkins' /

Wilkins' influence, he adds:

"...the obsolete and unbecoming dress wherein our Singing Psalms have so long disguis'd seem'd not the least (among vulgar errors) to this judicious Prelate."

It has been suggested that the mildness and catholicity, which characterize the writings of Watts in prose and verse, are due to the influence of the Cambridge Platonists.⁵⁴ There is no evidence that Watts read the works of Whichcote, Cudworth, Smith and More, though he resembles them in spiritual temper. Perhaps some features of Platonism reached Watts through the work of John Norris, who was one of the major influences of his early years.⁵⁵ It is more probable, however, that the qualities of gentleness, moderation, tolerance and ecumenicity which abound in Watts' writings in prose and verse, whilst they were native to his fine personality, owed a great deal to the influence of John Wilkins, of whom it has been written:

"he joined with those who studied to propagate better thoughts, to take men off from being in parties, or from narrow notionism, from superstitious conceits, and a fierceness about opinions....He was a lover of mankind, and had a delight in doing good."⁵⁶

Young Watts in his student days caught from Wilkins' books something of the spiritual disposition of the sweet-tempered and tolerant Anglican, who had looked so kindly upon the harassed Nonconformists. Like him Watts was a Christian humanist, sharing the same scientific pursuits, and copying, perhaps unconsciously, the Bishop's lucid and simple/

simple style.

IV

"Dwelt at my father's house 2 years and $\frac{1}{4}$ " ⁵⁷

On the completion of his academic training at Stoke Newington, in the summer of 1694, Watts returned to Southampton, and spent over two years in his parents' home in further study and meditation. Gibbons dismisses this important period in a short paragraph, and Milner regrets "that he has left us no record of his views and feelings at this critical era", and shares the general bewilderment that a man so equipped intellectually and by religious experience should have delayed entering upon the work of the ministry. Wright has nothing new to add. And the same applies to Hood. Davis, Watts' latest biographer, has even less to say than the others. ⁵⁸ They all agree however (on Mr. Price's evidence) ⁵⁹ that it was at this time, at his father's suggestion, that Watts turned his attention, in a realistic way, to the reform of the worship-song of a particular church. All are in agreement that the first congregational hymn Watts wrote was the one beginning "Behold the Glories of the Lamb", and they all quote his brother Enoch's letter requesting him to give his hymns to the world. ⁶⁰

Yet this comparatively unrecorded period in the life of Watts was the most momentous and exciting in his evolution as a hymnologist. And/

And, judging from his father's suggestion and his brother's letter, we are most probably right in regarding Watts' home-circle as the fons et origo of his first hymnological labours and reforms. He was doubtless encouraged as a young man to study the subject of Church praise, as he had been, when a school boy, to apply himself to classical literature and English prosody.

A number of the Southampton hymns must have been written under the same conditions as the lyrics, as the expression of the occasional moods of the spirit, the lighter employment of the young poet's leisure hours. But this sporadic hymn-writing would hardly satisfy for long a logical and philosophic mind such as Watts possessed. He is that uncommon being, a lyrical poet trying to be logical and coherent. And if he required a rationale for his lyrics,⁶¹ how much more for the hymns, which were written to meet practical needs. Watts had the kind of mind which needed what Leslie Stephen calls the Augustan "diagram". To change the figure, he worked more happily and with greater zest within some kind of mental scaffolding. It was to provide such a scaffolding for his work in psalmody that during these days of leisure and quiet in his father's house at Southampton, he read widely in Church History, ransacked every available commentary on the Psalms and the Pauline Epistles, and familiarized himself with the chief versions of the metrical psalter, with their prefaces, and the hymnological work of John Mason, Richard Baxter, Joseph Stennett, Samuel Bury, Joseph Boyse, and others.⁶²

It remains for us to gather together the heterogenous matters mentioned in this chapter, and relate them to the development of the young hymnologist. A Puritan piety of a meditative cast, nurtured on the Bible; a lyrical gift strengthened by admiration of the mystico-devotional poets of the seventeenth century, with their deposit of catholic theology; a life-long interest in English prosody, stimulated by friendship with versifiers like John Hughes and Samuel Say; the experimental and realistic education of a dissenting academy, with the intellectually liberating influence of Thomas Rowe; the impact of the language reform of the Royal Society, through the writings of John Wilkins, and the inspiring influence of Wilkins' personality; a later familiarity with the labours of his predecessors for Church praise, chief of whom perhaps was Richard Baxter and his followers - all these combined in the naturally systematic, tolerant and unpartisan mind of Watts to make him a Catholic hymn-writer and the father of modern English hymnology. But to leave it at that would be to do violence to the facts. Before Watts left Stoke Newington Academy he possessed almost all the ingredients in this synthesis, but there is no evidence of his having written a hymn for congregational use. Whatever work Watts had done, or contemplated doing, for Church praise had been theoretical only before he set foot in his father's house on that memorable Sunday morning, after perhaps an/

an unusually distasteful diet of psalmody at the Southampton Meeting-house. During his student days Watts, who was naturally of a retiring disposition, had moved with ease only in 'polite' society. In the dedication of his lyrical gift to God, he had truly found his star. He had yet to find a waggon to which he could hitch it. To employ another metaphor, Watts had splendid wings for the empyrean, but he had no boots for the paving-stones. It was the demand of a concrete situation, the worship scene of a definite congregation, composed largely of lowly folk, that changed the eclectic poet into a Puritan hymn-writer. His home church at Southampton helped Watts to find himself as the first, and in some senses, the greatest hymnologist of the English-speaking churches, and to show him where his God-given genius truly lay.

For the rest, the even tenor of his life, even the long periods of illness or semi-invalidism, were used of God to afford the secessum scribentis et otia, without which no man, however high his genius, can produce a complete system of praise for the Church of his day and generation.

NOTES

- ¹ Stephen, Leslie, History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, 3rd ed., London, 1902, vol.ii., pp.384-6.
- ² Memorable Affairs in my Life, appended to E. Paxton Hood, Isaac Watts; His Life and Writings, etc., London, 1875.
- ³ Wright, Thomas, The Life of Isaac Watts, London, 1914, pp.4-5.
- ⁴ Manning, Bernard L., The Hymns of Wesley and Watts, London, 1942. This Miltonic use of names is illustrated in the verse of Watts in Hymns and Spiritual Songs, Book 1. Hymn 28, lines 1-4; H.73, lines 21-24; H.76, lines 19-20; H.119, lines 13-16, H.145, lines 1-4; in Psalms of David Imitated by Ps.72, 2nd Pt. lines 9-12; Ps.76, lines 1-4; Ps.87, lines 13-16: and in Horae Lyricae by True Riches (Bk 2, lines 47-74).
- ⁵ See his Preface to the second edition of Horae Lyricae, in the section on "Poems of Heroic Measure."
- ⁶ Lycidas is reflected in Horae Lyricae (1709) Bk.1. "Converse with Christ" stanza 8, lines 4-5, also in Bk.3 "An Elegy on the Reverend Mr. Gouge", chiefly in line 6, and in Horae Lyricae (1705) Bk.2 "To the Lady Abney. A Funeral Poem on Thos. Gunston, Esq.," lines 19-20, 307-320.

Il Penseroso is reflected in Horae, Bk.2 "The Afflictions of a Friend"

L'Allegro is echoed in Horae Lyricae, Bk.2 "The Reverse: or, the Comforts of a Friend."

Paradise Lost in the Miscellanies XXIV. "The wearisome weeks of sickness" lines 14-18.

Milton's sublimity is echoed in "The Adventurous Muse" Stanza 5. Horae Lyricae (1709).

The epic manner by Hymns and Spiritual Songs. Bk.2, Hymn 18, lines 1-9; Bk.1, H.128, final verse.

The theme of the Fall of the Angels is found in Hymns and Spiritual Songs, Bk 1, H.58, lines 9-12; Bk.2, H.24, lines 5-12.

- ⁷ See Horae Lyricae (1705) Bk.2, p.209.
- ⁸ Watts lived at the house of Sir John Hartopp at Stoke Newington, as tutor to the family, from October 1696-1702.
- ⁹ See St. John, J.A., Select Prose Works of Milton, London, 1836. For Milton's faith in England Cf. Areopagitica and Hutchinson, F.R., Milton and the English Mind, 1946, Chapt.9. For Milton's view of the supremacy of Biblical poetry cf. Paradise Regained Bk.4, lines 331-350; 356-64. For his view of the divine vocation of the poet cf. "Account of his own studies", St. John, op. cit., vol.1, pp.16, 56.
- ¹⁰ Horae Lyricae, 1705, Bk.2, p.209 "Ad Reverendum Virum Dom. Johannem Pinhorne fidum pueritiae meae Praeceptorem. Oda." Watts also gifted a portrait to Pinhorne on his ordination.
- ¹¹ Cf. Pinto, V. de Sola, "Isaac Watts and the Adventurous Muse." Essays and Studies (English Association), 1935, vol.XX, pp.86ff.
- ¹² History of English Prosody, 2 vols. Oxford, 1946.
- ¹³ Cf. Horae Lyricae, 1705, Bk.1, p.40, "The Day of Judgment, an Ode in English Sapphic".
- ¹⁴ For other references to Watts' literary and prosodic significance see:
 Quiller-Couch, Sir Arthur, Studies in Literature, 1st Series Cambridge, 1930, p.69.
 Courthope, W.J., A History of English Poetry, 1905.
Cambridge History of English Literature, vol.IX, Chapt.6, pp.177ff. Vol.II. Chapt.16, p.372.
 Housman, A.E., The Name and Nature of Poetry, Cambridge. 1935, pp.30-1.
 Cowper, William, Letters (A Selection) Edited by E.V. Lucas, The Worlds Classics, pp.82-3
- ¹⁵ Memorable Affairs in my Life.

- ¹⁶ Cf. Davis, Arthur Paul, Isaac Watts his Life and Works, New York, 1943, p.10.
Parker, Irene, Dissenting Academies in England. Cambridge, 1914, pp.49-69.

- ¹⁷ Watts became a member of this Church. See Memorable Affairs in my Life.

- ¹⁸ Horae Lyricae 1705, Bk. 2, p.153 "To the Reverend Mr. Thomas Rowe. Free Philosophy."

- ¹⁹ Cf. Gibbons, Thomas, Memoirs of the Rev. Isaac Watts, D.D. London, 1780. On pp.20ff. Gibbons gives theological essays from Watts' Academy note-books.

- ²⁰ See Escott, Harry, "Isaac Watts: Nonconformist". The London Quarterly and Holborn Review, January 1949, pp.54-9. The article deals fully with the spirit of rebellion in the career of Watts.

- ²¹ Cf. Chapters 3 and 6, below.

For illustrations of patriotism in the actual verse of Watts, see Horae Lyricae Bk.1 "A Hymn of Praise for three great Salvations. The Second Part", stanzas VI, VIII: Hymns and Spiritual Songs, Bk.1, H.53, lines 13-16; Bk.2 H.92, lines 17-24; H.149, lines 9-12. Psalms of David Imitated. Ps.18, 1st Pt. lines 25-28, 2nd Pt. lines 5-8; Ps.19 1st Pt. lines 13-14; Ps.20, lines 13-16; Ps.47, lines 21-24; Ps.48 1st Pt. lines 5-8, lines 17-20, 21-24; Ps.60, lines 9-12. 17-24; Ps.67, lines 1-4, 5-8, 13-16, 23-24, 25-28; Ps. 75, lines 5-8; Ps.147 2nd Pt. lines 21-24.

- ²² Milner, Thomas, The Life, Times and Correspondence of the Rev. Isaac Watts, D.D., London, 1834, pp.127-36.
Hood, op. cit., pp.19-22.
Davis, op. cit., pp.15ff.

- ²³ Milner, op. cit., pp.127-36.
and Letters by several eminent persons deceased including the correspondence of John Hughes, Esq....and several of his friends.... 2 vols., London, 1772.

- ²⁴ Reliquiae Juveniles: Miscellaneous Thoughts in Prose and verse,
on/

on Natural, Moral and Divine Subjects; Written chiefly in Younger Years....., London, 1734.

²⁵ Letters... op. cit., vol.1, p.220.

²⁶ Cf. Abbey, C.J. and Overton, J.H., The English Church in the Eighteenth Century, London, 1878, vol.2, p.252.

²⁷ Watts' later book of Miscellanies (see note 24 above) seems to be based on Norris's A Collection of Miscellanies: etc., 1678. Cf. Chapt.2 below.

²⁸ See Milner, op. cit., p.133

²⁹ Matthew Casimire Sarbiewski (1595-1640), was a Polish Jesuit who wrote latin poems on moral and religious subjects. An English translation of his odes, together with the latin text, was made soon after his death by a certain G. Hills, and was published in 1646. It consists of twenty-seven odes and seven epigrams, all in rhymed verse. The book is illustrated with a woodcut representing Horace and Casimire sitting on two hilltops, and above them, a Muse, crown in hand. Hills and others regarded Casimire as the "Christian Horace". Henry Vaughan (1622-95) was also an admirer of the Polish neo-latin poet, and translated six of his odes and published them together with his original verses in a collection entitled Olor Iscanus, 1651. Watts paraphrases the following poems of Casimire in Horae Lyricae - Odes:iii. 28. I. 4,19. ii. 2. IV.4. 12. and Epodes: IV.15. Some of Watts' Hymns were also influenced by the Polish poet. Cf. Chapt.9 below.

³⁰ Hood, op. cit., p.140.

³¹ Milner, op. cit., p.131

³² ibid, p.135

³³ Milner, op. cit., 32-6: Hood, op. cit., p.140; Wright, op. cit., p.5, 17; Gibbons, op. cit., p.89; Davis, op. cit., pp.3-4.

³⁴/

³⁴ Milner, op. cit., p.33: Hood, op. cit., p.2.

³⁵ Milner, op. cit., p.36: Wright, op. cit., p.17.

³⁶ Gibbons, op. cit., p.89.

³⁷ *ibid*, pp.49-50: Milner, op. cit., p.130.
Hughes, Obad., Funeral Sermon for Rev. S. Say, London, 1743.

³⁸ Poems on Several Occasions: and Two Critical Essays, viz., the first on the Harmony, Variety, and Power of Numbers, whether in prose or verse; the second on the Numbers of Paradise Lost: by Samuel Say, London, 1745.

³⁹ Memoirs of the Rev. Isaac Watts, D.D., London, 1780, p.91.

⁴⁰ Letters..., etc. op. cit., vol.1, p.132.

⁴¹ Gibbons, op. cit., 62ff. thinks that quite a number of the lyrics were written in the Academy. So does Milner, op. cit., p.239: "Many of them appear to have been composed in the year 1694; and some are dated as early as 1691". The same writer, on p.130, says: "The leisure hours enjoyed by these gifted young men were spent in each other's society, in the task of mutual improvement; and many of Watts' imitations of the classics, versions of the psalms, and miscellaneous productions were suggested, conceived, or executed at this period".
See also Chapt.2 below.

⁴² Milner, op. cit., p.131.

⁴³ See Chapt. 2 and 6, below.

⁴⁴ Hood, op. cit., p.141.

⁴⁵ Cf. Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society (of America) Sept. 1902, p.358.

⁴⁶/

⁴⁶ Payne, Ernest A., The Free Church Tradition in the Life of England. London, 1944, p.70 (bottom).

⁴⁷ Whitley, W.T., Congregational Hymn-Singing in England, London, 1933, p.110.

⁴⁸ A reliable study of John Wilkins has yet to be written. There is no full biography.
Cf. Smith, David Nichol, Characters from the Histories and Memoirs of the Seventeenth Century, Oxford, 1929. pp.246, 252, 320-1.

The Dictionary of National Biography.

Henderson, P.A. Wright, The Life and Times of John Wilkins, Edinburgh, 1910.

Lyons, Sir Henry, The Royal Society 1660-1940, Cambridge, 1944, pp.54, 57, 67, 84.

⁴⁹ "This academy was indeed the most considerable having..a laboratory and some not inconsiderable rarities with air pump, thermometre, and all sorts of mathematical instruments (Wesley, Samuel, A Letter from a Country Divine to His Friend in London concerning the Education of the Dissenters in their Private Academies..London, 1703). In the same pamphlet Wesley mentions the manner of the Academy's life. It was marked by freedom, the students themselves being mainly responsible for discipline, having "a sort of democratic government". Daniel Defoe speaks of the wide sweep of the Academy's curriculum. It had given him, he says, a mastery of five languages, and there he had studied mathematics, natural philosophy, logic, geography, history, and "politics as a science". The lectures were all in English.

⁵⁰ Cf. The Congregational Magazine, May 1835, p.189.

⁵¹ Hood, op. cit., p.278.

⁵² Cf. Gosse, Edmund, A History of Eighteenth Century Literature, London, 1891, p.76.

⁵³ "I resign to Sir John Denham the Honour of the best Poet, if he had given his Genius but a just Liberty..." etc.
Preface/

Preface to Psalms of David Imitated, 1719.

See Chapt.6, below.

⁵⁴ Cf. Pinto op. cit.,

⁵⁵ For a summary of John Norris's influence on Watts see Chapt.2 and notes.

⁵⁶ Quoted from Burnet's History of his own Times in Nichol Smith, op. cit., pp.246, 7.

⁵⁷ Memorable Affairs in my Life.

⁵⁸ Cf. Gibbons, op. cit., p.92
 Milner, op. cit., pp.138ff.
 Wright, op. cit., pp.30-1
 Hood, op. cit., pp.30-1
 Davis, op. cit., p.20, 198.

⁵⁹ Cf. Hood, op. cit., p.90.

⁶⁰ Hood, op. cit., pp.84-7.

⁶¹ Cf. Chapt. 2, below.

⁶² Cf. Chapt. 3, below.

Ely. J. T. Butth

HORÆ LYRICÆ.

POEMS,
Chiefly of the *Lyrickind*.
In Two Books.

I.

SONGS, &c. Sacred to DEVOTION.

II.

ODES, ELEGYS, &c. to VERTUE
Loyalty and Friendship.

By I. WATTS.

— Si non Uranie lyram
Cælestem cohibet, nec Polyhymnia
Humanum refugit tendere barbiton.

Horat. Od. i. Imitat.

Ἀθάνατον μὲν πρῶτα Θεὸν, καὶ ἔπειτα ἀγῶνι

Ἡρώας τιμῶν. — Pythag. Aur. Carm.

L O N D O N,

Printed by S. and D. Bridge, for John Lawrence at
the Sign of the *Angel* in the Poultry. MDCCVI.

TITLE-PAGE OF FIRST EDITION OF HORÆ LYRICÆ

CHAPTER 2

APPRENTICESHIP TO HYMNODY

"I did not leap of a sudden, and irreverently into this employment; but having consumed almost the years of an apprenticeship in studies of this kind, I entered thereunto conscionably and in the fear of God". So wrote George Wither, the hymn-writer, in 1624.¹ Take away the note of self-pity, and the words might have been written by Isaac Watts at the beginning of his work as a hymn-writer. His apprenticeship ended with the publication of Horae Lyricae, which marks the transition from devotional verse to hymn-writing, and constitutes a seed-plot of his later labours in the fields of psalm-imitation and Christian hymnody.

The first edition bears the date 1706. But Watts in his Memorandum states that it came from the press in December, 1705.² The correct date has now been settled through the discovery of a letter of Watts to Samuel Say on the fly-leaf of a complimentary copy of Horae Lyricae, which bears the date 28 December, 1705.³ Throughout this thesis, we have adopted this dating for the publication of the first edition of Horae Lyricae.

Unhappily the confusion with regard to Watts' first book has not been confined to the date of its publication: it extends also to its character and contents. Even Arthur Paul Davis in his recent life/

life of Watts, excellent in so many ways, displays his ignorance of the original format and content of Horae Lyricae. So does Dr. Julian.⁴ In spite of Watts' warning in the preface to the second edition, 1709, his biographers almost to a man have imagined that the two editions of the book were identical in arrangement and content.⁵ Actually, there are great differences. There are two, and not three books, in the 1705 edition, and the number of items is considerably smaller than in the edition of 1709. Some of the titles of the poems differ in the two editions, and a group of historically important psalm versions, printed in 1705, is omitted in 1709. In addition to these differences the prefaces to the two books are not identical: the earlier is only some 2,500 words long, whereas the 1709 preface, which with minor changes appeared in all later issues of the book, has grown to around 6,700 words.⁶

It has been said that as poet and hymnist Watts worked from a blue-print.⁷ This rationalizing bent of his mind is first seen in the 1705 preface to Horae Lyricae, which we print in full in the Appendix, p. 2.

The preface begins with the lament that Poetry, which was in origin the helpmate of morals and religion, has been severed from its high purpose, and used for lower ends. The earliest Hebrew poem that we possess is wedded to a religious aim; and the mission of the Muse was regarded in this very way throughout Old Testament and New Testament times. Nor was it thought of differently in the early days of Greek/

Greek literature. But the later pagan poets debased this originally divine Muse, and modern English writers have surpassed them in their misuse of the poetic gift, and "have given a Relish to Blasphemies of the harshest kind". What is the use of Societies for Reformation of Manners, if the main stream of the nation's life be poisoned by licentious poems and plays? The poets who have prostituted their divine gifts will be brought some day to the judgment-bar of God. Jeremy Collier is a writer who has justly criticised this evil trend in modern literature. It is a pity that the poetic gift should not have been used to propagate better things, such as the wonders of God's power and the redeeming love of Christ. That would truly reform the nation, and melt "Souls of Iron to the Love of Virtue". The criticism of Boileau, that Christianity does not lend itself to poetic treatment, has no foundation in fact; some modern poems like the Davideis and the Two Arthurs are sufficient confutation of the French critic's opinion. Besides the Christian mysteries are poetry in themselves: they are so full of wonder and surprise, that they require few, if any, of the extraneous trappings of the Muse. There is nothing in heathen literature or later Romances to equal the Christian theme as a subject for poetry. The former are full of "fooleries", but the Gospel is not only the highest truth, but of eternal concern to men. With how much less toil our modern poets and dramatists could have produced Christian works and called back the dying piety of the nation to life and loveliness! Abraham Cowley/

Cowley and Sir Richard Blackmore, have made this same lament, and each has done something to show the amenability of religion to poetic treatment.

But his own contribution to the reform of letters will not be a long poem like theirs. The genre in which he proposes to work is the short poem such as the Psalms of David, the moral odes of Horace, and the ancient lyric. And his main purpose is to enforce the message of the preacher and "diffuse Virtue and allure Souls to God".⁸

This had been the aim of some of John Norris's verses in his Miscellanies. Watts thinks however, that in the prosecution of his own purpose "the unconfined Measures of Pindar" would have been more successful than the "narrow Numbers of our Old Psalm-Translators", which he himself has used perhaps too frequently, at the sacrifice of the rapture of faith and love. Sharing the Puritan's shame of being thought to idle on the flowery flanks of Parnassus,⁹ he assures the reader that these Horae are only, as their name implies, leisure hour pursuits. Poetry is not the business of his life.

There his poetic theory ends. He proceeds briefly to describe the character of the poems themselves. And what he says about the Songs Sacred to Devotion seems to strike an unliterary note, dissonant with what had gone before: these were written, he says, not for the eye of the literary critic,

"but only to assist the Meditations and Worship of Vulgar Christians, to whom the Measures of Hopkins by Custom are grown Familiar and Natural, and esteemed almost Sacred by being bound up in the same Volume with Scripture."

And/

And then follow the most important words of all:

"These are but a small part of two hundred Hymns of the same kind which are ready for Public Use if the World receive favourably what I now present. The Reason that sent these out first, and divided them from their Fellows, is, that in most of These there are some Expressions which are not suited to the plainest Capacities, and differ too much from the usual Methods of Speech in which Holy Things are propos'd to the general Part of Mankind."

This preface has not one aim but two which are clumsily dovetailed together. First, there is the original aim, to provide moral and spiritual verse - in Watts' case, for the polite reader. There was nothing revolutionary in this. It is as old, at least, as a 1527 Preface by Luther:

"I wished to provide our young people...with something whereby they might rid themselves of amorous and carnal songs, and in their stead learn something wholesome, and so apply themselves to what is good with pleasure... I would fain see all the arts...used in the service of Him who hath given and created them".¹⁰

The tendency to spiritualize secular verse, or provide devotional poetry to supplant it in popular esteem, is seen a little later in Britain in the work of Coverdale and the Wedderburn brothers,¹¹ who derived the method from Luther. Sternhold expresses the same purpose on his title-page, 1578:

"....for their Godly solace and comfort, laying apart all ungodly songes and Balades, which tend onely to the nourishyng of vice, and corruptyng of youth".¹²

It was a motive of Marot's psalmody. It is present in Beza's preface to the completed Psalter.¹³ And it is prominent in the forewords of all the metrical psalm versions which appeared in the seventeenth/

seventeenth century.¹⁴ It was also an important part of the mission of the devotional poet: Drayton, Wither, Milton, Herbert, Waller, Norris, Baxter, and many others embraced it.¹⁵ Collier, Cowley, Dennis and Tate in prose sponsored the method before Watts.¹⁶ And since Watts' day, whenever poetry has sought other degrading lovers, voices have not been wanting to remind her of her ancient and holy espousals.¹⁷

During his student days at Stoke Newington Watts very probably gathered together his fugitive verse on moral and religious themes under some only roughly devised rationale.¹⁸ Months of complete leisure in his father's house afforded the opportunity to edit them properly, and to give careful expression in a literary preface to the philosophy that informed them. That his original purpose was purely literary, is seen from the character of the poems themselves. Latin odes, imitations of classical themes and metres, pindaric elegies, mystical meditations, these were hardly the sort of things to appeal to an ordinary reader. The learned cast of the preface, with its allusions to classical scholarship and French literary criticism, was undoubtedly intended to catch the eye of the intelligentsia. Watts himself almost says as much in the enlarged preface of 1709:

"Young Gentlemen and Ladies, whose Genius and Education have given them a Relish of Oratory and Verse, may be tempted to seek Satisfaction among the dangerous Diversions of the Stage, and impure Sonnets, if there is no Provision of a safer kind made to please them".(p.XXIV)

"....if I could but make up a Composition of Virtue and Delight, suited to the Taste of well-bred Youth, and a refin'd/

refin'd Education, I had some Hope to allure and raise them thereby above the vile Temptations of degenerate Nature, and Custom, that is yet more degenerate". (p.XXV.)

The fact is, at the time when these poems were conceived or written, Watts was not fitted to be a popular poet; and it was not a popular audience that he sought.¹⁹ His aim was to attract the polite reader, whose tastes he knew only at this time, to virtue and religion, much after the manner of John Norris, with whom temperamentally he was akin, and who had also sought the notice of cultivated readers for his own Miscellanies.²⁰ Watts pondered Norris's poems, and there are echoes of the older poet's advertisement to the Reader in Watts' preface. Compare, for example, the preface to Horae Lyricae, quoted in the Appendix, with these passages from Norris:

"....Poetry is of late mightily fallen from the Beauty of its Idea, and from its ancient Majesty and Grandeur, as well as Credit and Reputation.

"Poetry was once the Mistress of all the Arts in the circle, that which held the Rains (sic) of the World in her Hand, and which gave the first, and (if we may judge by the effects) perhaps the best Institutes for the moralizing and governing the Passions of Mankind.

"The Design therefore of the present Undertaking is to restore the declining Genius of Poetry to its primitive and genuine Greatness....and accordingly I have made choice for the most part of Divine and Moral Subjects".

That Watts was influenced by Norris's Foreword to the Miscellanies is further corroborated by his adoption of a quotation from Horace, which Norris ~~also~~²¹ had also used.

But in addition to this purely literary purpose, we discern towards/

towards the end of Watts' preface, the appearance of a new aim - to test the willingness of the Church to adopt hymns in its worship, he offers a poetic sample of two hundred hymns of a simpler sort which he has ready for publication. It is this jerky transition from devotional lyric to hymn that constitutes the historical importance of Horae Lyricae, 1705, to the student of Watts' evolution as a hymn-writer. Had Watts in the pride and ardour of youth never been challenged to improve the worship-song of the Southampton Congregation, his first book of poems would have been more of an artistic unity but considerably less interesting, and of little literary or historical value.²² As it is, the content of the book, which shows soaring pindarics, mystical meditations, moral odes, congratulatory verses, psalm translations and hymns side by side, suggests that a practical interest had made Watts tire of his original doctrinaire purpose. Perhaps some of the poems originally intended for Horae, were removed in favour of hymns and psalm versions, to be given a place in the second edition, or in his Miscellanies, which claim to be in large measure a collection of verses written in youth.²³

The following Table attempts - what Watts himself considered almost an impossible task - a comparison of the contents of the 1705 and subsequent editions of Horae Lyricae.²⁴

CONTENTS OF THE FIRST BOOK/

CONTENTS OF THE FIRST BOOK1705

The Divine Sovereignty. p.1
 The Transcendent Glories of
 the Deity. p.4
 God appears most Glorious in
 our Salvation by Christ. p.7
 An Hymn of Praise to the God
 of England, etc. p.10
 God Incomprehensible. p.16.
 Sickness gives a Sight of
 Heaven. p.18.
 The Universal Hallelujah - Or
 Psalm 148 Paraphras'd. p.21.
 The Love of Christ on his Cross
 and on his Throne. p.25
 Death a Welcome Messenger. p.27
 Sincere Praise. p.29.
 God's Infinity. p.32
 Longing for the second coming of
 Christ. p.34.
 The Sufferings and Glories of
 Christ. A Song in Trisyllabic
 Feet. p.37
 The Day of Judgment, an Ode in
 English Sapphic. p.40 .
 Confession and Pardon. p.43
 Jesus the only Saviour. p.48
 A Song of Praise to God, the
 100th Psalm, In Trisyllabic Feet.
 p.52.
 AN ESSAY ON A FEW PSALMS IN
 LANGUAGE MORE SUITED TO THE
 GOSPEL.
 The Happy Saint and Cursed
 Sinner. Psalm 1. p.54
 Doubts and Fears Supprest.
 Psalm 3rd p.56.
 Praise to the Lord from all
 nations. Psalm 100. p.59
 Brotherly Love. Psalm 133 p.61.
 The Pleasures of Love to Christ
 present or absent. p.62
 A Sight of Christ. p.65
 Longing/

Later Editions

Asking Leave to Sing.
 The Creator and Creatures.
 God Glorious, and Sinners
 Saved.
 A Hymn of Praise for three
 great Salvations.
 The Incomprehensible.
 A Sight of Heaven in Sickness.
 The universal Hallelujah,
 Psal. CXLVIII.
 Love on a Cross, and a Throne.
 (removed to Poems on Love)
 The Welcome Messenger.
 Sincere Praise.
 The Infinite.
 Come, Lord Jesus. (removed to
 Poems of Divine Love.)

OMITTED

The Day of Judgment, etc.
 Confession and Pardon.
 Jesus the only Saviour.

OMITTED

OMITTED

Love to Christ present or
 absent. (removed to Poems of
 Divine Love.)
 A Sight of Christ. (removed to
 Poems of Divine Love.)

Longing for Heaven, or the Song
of Angels above. p.70.
God Sovereign and Gracious. p.76
AN ESSAY ON DIVINE LOVE IN
SEVERAL FOLLOWING ODES, IN
IMITATION OF SOLOMON'S SONG.
The Hazard of Loving the
Creatures. p.78
Christ's Amazing Love and my
Amazing Coldness. p.80.
Wishing him ever with me. p.82
The Absence of the Beloved. p.84
Sick of Love, etc. p.86

Sitting in an Arbour. p.88
Bewailing my own Inconstancy.
p.90
Forsaken, yet hoping. p.93

The Law and Gospel. p.95
The Death of Moses - Deut.32.
49,50 and 34. 5,6, or the
Enjoyment of God worth dying
for. p.97.
Ad Dominum nostrum et
Servatorum Jesum Christum. Oda.
p.100
Excitatio Cordis Coelum
versus. Ad Suipsum. p.106.
Breathing toward the Heavenly
Country. p.108.
The Glories of God Exceed all
Worship. p.110

END OF BK.1 (1705)

The Song of Angels above.

Sovereignty and Grace.

DO.

The Hazard of Loving the
Creatures.
Desiring to love Christ.

OMITTED

The Absence of Christ.
Grace shining, and Nature
fainting.
Meditation in a Grove.
Bewailing my own Inconstancy.

Forsaken, yet hoping.

(for additions to this series,
cf. previous and following
page.)

The Law and Gospel.
The Presence of God worth
dying for: Or, The Death of
Moses.

Ad Dominum Nostrum, etc.

Excitatio, etc.

Breathing towards Heaven,
Casimir. B.1.0d.19.
God exalted above all Praise

ADDITIONAL POEMS IN THE FIRST BOOK.

Worshipping with Fear.
Divine Judgments.
Earth and Heaven.
Felicity above.
God's Dominion and Decrees.
Self Consecration.
The Nativity of Christ.
The/

The humble Enquiry. A French
 Sonnet imitated.
 The Penitent pardoned.
 Death and Eternity.
 The Atheist's Mistake.
 The Law given at Sinai.
 Remember thy Creator.
 Sun, Moon and Stars, praise
 ye the Lord.
 True Learning.
 Song to Creating Wisdom.
 God's absolute Dominion.
 Condescending Grace.
 Young Men and Maidens, etc.
 praise ye the Lord.
 Flying Fowl, etc., praise ye
 the Lord.
 The Comparison and Complaint.
 God supreme and self-sufficient
 Jesus, the only Saviour.
 Looking upward.
 Christ dying, rising, and
 reigning.
 The God of Thunder.
 Fire, Air, Earth and Sea,
 praise ye the Lord.
 The Farewell.
 God only known to himself.
 Pardon and Sanctification.
 Seeking a Divine Calm, etc.,
 Casimir, B.4. Od.28.
 Happy Frailty.
 Launching into Eternity.
 A Prospect of the Resurrection.
 Sui ipsius Increpatio:
 Epigramma.
 In Sanctum Ardalionem, etc.,
 Casim., Epig. 100.
 On the Protestant Church at
 Montpellier demolished. Two
 Latin Epigrams englished.
 Two happy Rivals, Devotion and
 the Muse.

ADDED TO POEMS OF DIVINE LOVE.
 (cf. also previous pages)

The Heart given away.
 The Fairest and the Only
 Beloved.
 Mutual/

Mutual Love stronger than
Death.
A Preparatory Thought for
the Lord's-Supper.
Converse with Christ.
Desiring his Descent to
Earth.
Ascending to him in Heaven.
Longing for his Return.
Hope in Darkness.

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To Mr. John Lock, retir'd from
Business. p.117.
To Mr. John Shute, on Mr. Lock's
last Sickness. p.119.
To Mr. William Nokes. Friend-
ship. p.121.
To Nathaniel Gould, Esq.,;
Lawful Ambition. p.123
To Dr. Thomas Gibson. The Life
of Souls. p.125.
To my Brothers E. and T.W.
False Greatness. p.128.
To Mr. A.S. and Mr. T.H. Strict
Religion exceeding rare. p.130.
On the sudden Death of Mrs.
Mary Peacock. p.133.
To the Rev. Mr. Benoni Rowe.
Tis dangerous to follow the
multitude. p.136.
To my Sisters S. and M.W. An
Epistle. p.138.
To Mr. C. and S. Fleetwood. The
World vain, and the Soul
Immortal. p.141.
To Mr. William Blackbourn. Life
flies too fast to be wasted.
p.144.
To Mr. Robert Atwood. The
Kingdom of the Wise Man. Pt.1
p.145.
(To Mr. Robert Atwood) Pt.2. Or
the Bold Stoic. p.150.

To/

To Her Majesty.

(Palinodia added 1721)

To John Lock, Esq., retir'd
from Business.
To John Shute, Esq.,; on Mr.
Lock's Death.
To Mr. William Nokes; Friend-
ship.
To Nathaniel Gould, Esq.

To Dr. Thomas Gibson: The Life
of Souls.
To Milo; False Greatness.

Strict Religion very rare.

An Elegiac Song on Mrs. Peacock.
(transposed to Bk.3)
To the Reverend Mr. Benoni Rowe:
The Way of the Multitude.

To Sarissa: An Epistle.

To Mr. C. and S. Fleetwood.

To Mr. William Blackbourn:
Cas. B.2. Od.2.

BOTH OMITTED



To the Reverend Mr. Thomas
Rowe. Free Philosophy. p.153
To the Reverend Mr. John Howe
The Vanity of Humane Cares.

p.155

To Mr. Nicholas Clark, Com-
plaining of Vapours or Dis-
orders of the Head. p.158
Upon the dismal Narrative of
the Afflictions of a Friend.

p.161.

The Reverse, or the view of
Remaining Comforts. p.164.
To the Right Honourable John
Lord Cutts. The Hardy Soldier

p.167

To Mrs. B. Bendish. Against
Tears. p.169

A Word of Warning, or Few
Happy Marriages. p.171.

To Mr. Henry Bendish. The
Indian Philosopher, or Matches
made above, but broke in
coming down. p.175.

To David Polhill, Esq., An
Epistle. p.180.

To David Polhill, Esq., An
Answer to an Infamous Satyr
against King William III.

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To the Discontented and
Unquiet. Vertue alone makes
the Mind Easy. p.189

To John Hartopp, Esq.,; Youth
and Pleasure tarry not. p.194

To Thomas Gunston, Esq.,;
Happy Solitude. p.197.

To John Hartopp, Esq.,; the
Disdain of Sensual Joys.

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Epistola. p.203

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Ad Reverendum Virum Dominum
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To the Reverend Mr. T. Rowe:
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To the Reverend Mr. John Howe.

To Mr. N. Clark: The Complaint.

The Afflictions of a Friend.

The Reverse: or, the Comforts
of a Friend.

To the Right Honourable
John Lord Cutts: The Hardy
Soldier.

To Mrs. B. Bendysh; Against
Tears.

Few happy Matches.

To Mr. Henry Bendysh: The
Indian Philosopher.

To David Polhill, Esq., An
Epistle.

To David Polhill, Esq., An
Answer to an infamous Satire
against King William.

To the Discontented and Unquiet.
Casim. B.4. Od.15.

To John Hartopp, Esq.,; Casim.
B.1. Ode 4.

To Thos. Gunston, Esq.,; Happy
Solitude. Casim. B.4. Od.12.

To John Hartopp, Esq.,; the
Disdain.

Epistola Fratri suo dilecto
R.W.

OMITTED

Ad Reverendum Virum Dominum,
etc.

pueritiae meae Praeceptorem.
Oda. p.209.

Votum. Seu Vita in terris
Beata. Ad Virum dignissimum
Johannem Hartoppium Baronet-
tum. p.215.

To the Lady Abney. A Funeral
Poem on Thos. Gunston, Esq.,
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To Mr. Arthur Shallet, Mer-
chant: An Eleciac Ode on the
Reverend Mr. Thomas Gouge.
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An Epitaph on King William III
of Glorious Memory. p.264.

END OF FIRST EDITION.

Ad Johannem Hartoppium
Baronettum: Votum, seu Vita
in Terris beata.

A Funeral Poem on Thomas
Gunston, Esq.,
(transposed to Bk.3.)

An Elegy on the Reverend
Mr. Gouge.
(transposed to Bk.3)

An Epitaph on King William
(transposed to Bk.3)

ADDITIONAL POEMS IN 2ND BOOK.

To Mr. Thomas Bradbury:
Paradise.
True Monarchy.
True Courage.
The Disappointment and Relief.
The Hero's School of Mortality.
Freedom.
On Mr. Lock's Annotations, etc.
True Riches.
The adventurous Muse.
Burning several Poems of Ovid,
Martial etc.
The Celebrated Victory of the
Poles, etc. Casim. B.4 Ode 4.
The Happy Man.
To Mitio, my Friend: The
Mourning-Piece.
The Second Part, or, the bright
Vision.
The Third Part, or, the Accounts
balanced.
On the Death of the Duke of
Glocester, etc. An Epigram.
An Epigram of Martial to
Cirinius, inscrib'd to Mr.
Josiah Hort.
Fratrī olim navigaturo.

To/

To Mrs. Singer; on the
Sight of some of her Divine
Poems unprinted.

ADDITIONAL POEMS IN 3RD BOOK.

Epitaphium Domini Nathanielis
Matheri.

An Elegiac Thought on Mrs.
Anne Warner.

On the Death of Mrs. M.W.

An examination of the Table brings out these general differences:-

1. The first edition has 76 items in two books, 39 in the first, and 37 in the second.
2. Subsequent editions have 135 items in three books, 81 in the first, 48 in the second, and 6 in the third.
3. Many of the titles of poems reprinted from the first edition have been simplified.

The titles of the poems on Divine Love, which are common to the 1705 and later editions, have been purged of sensuous content. The personal mode of address of some of the congratulatory poems in the second book is omitted in the later editions. The 1709 volume is almost a new book, from which several important items appearing in 1705 have been left out, titles of many of the remaining pieces altered, some transpositions made, a third book added along with 68 new poems. Accordingly, the second and subsequent editions are nearly/

nearly twice the size of the first.

For lack of this bibliographical knowledge students of Watts' work have erred in two directions: they have given the later and not the original titles to those hymns from *Horae Lyricae* that were later included in the corpus of Watts' work; secondly, they have lost sight of an early group of ~~Christianised~~ psalms, which appeared only in the first edition of *Horae*, and have failed to see Watts' work in evangelical psalmody in its true perspective²⁵.

We are concerned mainly with the first book of *Horae*, and proceed now to a more detailed analysis of its contents in the two editions.

The 1705 edition has 39 items, falling into five groups:

1. 2 latin poems.
2. 8 poems of Divine Love.
3. 4 psalm versions.
4. 22 lyrics and 'hybrid' hymns.
5. 3 metrical experiments.

In the 1709 edition these groups undergo changes as follows:

1. 4 latin poems (2 new ones being added)
2. 21 poems of Divine Love. (One of the original group is omitted, 5 have been transposed from group 1 to this group, and 9 new poems added.)
3. Left out.
4. 55 lyrics and 'hybrid' hymns. (17 of the original lyrics are retained, many with their titles altered, and 38 new ones added.)
5. 1 metrical experiment (2 of the original are omitted).

Group 5 may be dismissed, but groups 1-4 have an important bearing on the hymnological work of Watts.

1. The Latin Poems, some of whose companions in book 2 are dated, seem to represent Watts' earliest attempts at Christian verse.

These/

These consist of:

1705: Ad Dominum nostrum et Servatorem Jesum Christum. Oda.

Excitatio Cordia Coelum versus. Ad Suipsum.

1709: Sui ipsius Increpatio: Epigramma.

In Sanctum Ardalionem, etc.

The fourth poem, which Watts himself translates, may be dismissed as of little value to our purpose. The other three have a bearing upon the temper and theology of many of Watts poems and hymns. Only Thomas Gibbons, Watts' first biographer, thought fit to translate them, though very freely and paraphrastically into English verse. We shall use our own translation which, if lacking in literary elegance, keeps closer to the original, and expresses Watts' meaning.

The most important of the three poems is the Ode to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It deals in a daring and imaginative way with theological ideas such as the Pre-existence, Kenosis, Atonement, Resurrection and Exaltation of Christ, which occur frequently in the psalms and hymns. But its real importance to the student of Watts lies in its clear enunciation of what Gustaf Aulén has called the Christus Victor, or classical idea, of the Atonement, with its central conception of Christ's conflict with and triumph over Satan, Sin and Death on Man's account. Christus Victor indeed might have been the title of the poem:

See how the Conqueror rises from the uttermost depths of Hell,
carrying away the Monsters of the Night bound fast to his
golden chariot, and the overthrown Lord of Darkness.

With/

With what transports of joy the angels exult, when the Conqueror came once more to His Father's Heaven, See! how He gleams as triumphant He climbs to the portals of Paradise.

"Hosanna! the Conqueror!" let the seraph-song sound forth, and let the host of mankind take up the strain, while the joyful stars on all sides re-echo the twofold triumph.²⁸

We shall show later (Chapt. 6) that Watts might have owed something to the theology of the Mediaeval breviaries for his interpretation of the prophetic and Messianic Psalms. It is not improbable too that he knew the latin hymns and popular Easter carols of the Middle Ages which, at a time when the Christus Victor idea of the Atonement had been superseded by other theological interpretations, still kept the older doctrine because of its pictorial qualities and imaginative possibilities.(cf. Chapt. 9).

This Christ Victor idea colours the whole of Watts' writings in verse.

It appears in Horae Lyricae:

Low they adore th'Incarnate Son,
And sing the Glories he hath won;
Sing how he broke our Iron Chains,
How deep he sunk, how high he reigns.

Triumph and reign, victorious Lord,
By all thy flaming Hosts ador'd;
And say, dear Conqueror, say, how long,
E'er we shall rise to join their Song.

Jesus the only Saviour, stanzas 10,11. 1705.

In awful State the conquering God
Ascends his shining Throne,
While tuneful Angels sound abroad
The Vict'ries he has won.

Longing for Heaven, or the Song of
Angels above, stanza 18. 1705.

Sing/

Sing how he spoil'd the Hosts of Hell,
And led the Monster Death in Chains.

Christ Dying, Rising, and Reigning. st. 5
lines 3 and 4. 1709.

I hear the glorious Sufferer tell,
How on the Cross he vanquish'd Hell.

Converse with Christ, stanza 5, lines 1-2.

It is seen in at least two psalms in Psalms of David Imitated, 1719:

How will my Lips rejoyce to tell
The Victories of my King!
My Soul redeem'd from Sin and Hell
Shall thy Salvation sing.

Psalm 71, 2nd Pt. verse 5.

To-day he rose and left the Dead,
And Satan's Empire fell;
To-day the Saints his Triumph spread,
And all his Wonders tell.

Ps. 118, 4th Pt. verse 2.

But it is a more common theme in the Hymns and Spiritual Songs,
1707-9:

Then to thy Throne victorious King,
Then to thy Throne our Shouts shall rise;
Thine everlasting Arm we sing,
For Sin, the Monster, bleeds and dies.

Book 2, Hymn 24, verse 7.

Hell and the Grave unite their Force,
To hold our God in vain;
The sleeping Conqueror arose,
And burst their feeble Chain.

Book 2, Hymn 72, verse 3.

The/

The complete theme of the latin ode is reflected in Book 2, Hymn 76, which begins:

Hosanna to the Prince of Light
That cloth'd himself in Clay,
Enter'd the iron Gates of Death,
And tore the Bars away.

It emerges again in Book 2, Hymn 77, verse 2:

Hell and thy Sins resist thy Course,
But Hell and Sin are vanquish'd Foes;
Thy Jesus nail'd them to the Cross,
And sung the Triumph when he rose.

The whole of Hymn 79, Book 2, is concerned with the Christus Victor idea, particularly verse 4:

He spoil'd the Powers of Darkness thus,
And brake our iron Chains:
Jesus has freed our captive Souls
From everlasting Pains.

Other instances of its appearance in the Hymns are Hymn 89, Book 2, verse 1:

Hosanna to our conquering King!
The Prince of Darkness flies,
His Troops rush headlong down to Hell
Like Lightning from the Skies.

Hymn 16, Book 3, verse 5, lines 3-4:

Dying he conquer'd Hell and Sin,
And made his Triumph there.

Hymn 21, Book 3, verse 2:

Jesus the God that fought and bled,
And conquer'd when he fell,
That rose, and at his Chariot-Wheels
Dragg'd all the Powers of Hell.

Lastly, the same idea appears in Remnants of Time..., published post-humously/

humously in 1753, in the hybrid hymn Redemption, verse 6:

But see the Wonders of his Power,
He triumphs in his dying Hour,
And whilst by Satan's Rage he fell,
He dash'd the rising Hopes of Hell.

The other latin poems, The Excitation of the Heart towards Heaven, and Self-Reproof are early examples of the other-worldly and mystical strains in Watts' work, which are prominent in the lyrics and hymns. Both these poems have the same theme. We quote The Excitation:

Why, Watts, dost thou spend ages within the prison
of the body? Why dost thou flee the portal of
escape? Does not thy soul yearn for the heights
of heaven and the courts of thy great Father?

From this vile flesh a thousand ills arise;
around the heart fly grief and fear, and sin, more
cruel than all woes, lays hidden snares.

Nowhere on this earth arise joys to gladden
thee: Christ, thy Soul's delight, is far hence
and walks amid angels and bright stars.

Shouldst thou seek the heavenly heights, God
would not thunder and cast his angry bolts. He
bids thee go: hold thy course through the empty
air on wings now given to man.

These poems are an attempt to resolve the emotional and moral conflicts of adolescence by a kind of escape-mysticism.

With a thousand ills doth flesh oppress thee;
now weariness weighs upon youthful limbs, and
now vigorous blood nourishes offences. (Self-Reproof)

The mature Watts never entirely outgrew this mood of world-weariness, and whenever he moves far from the sphere of Scripture paraphrase, his work is in danger of being marred either by an asceticism which has no warrant in the Bible, or by a "luscious theology". This other-worldliness/

worldliness is found chiefly in the lyrics, where the muse is less checked by Scripture:

Why move my Years in slow Delay?
O God of Ages! Why?
Let the Spheres cleave, and mark my way
To the superior Sky.

Felicity Above, stanza 4 (1709)

Away, these interposing Days,
And let the Lovers meet;
The Angel has a cold Embrace,
But kind, and soft, and sweet.

Death a Welcome Messenger, stanza 6 (1705).

Lo, from afar the promis'd Day
Shines with a well distinguish'd Ray;
But my wing'd Passion hardly bears
These Lengths of slow delaying Years.

Send down a Chariot from above,
With fiery Wheels, and pav'd with Love;
Raise me beyond th'Ethereal Blue,
To sing and love as Angels do.

Jesus the only Saviour, stanzas 12, 13. (1705)

Vain World, farewell to you;
Heaven is my native Air;
I bid me Friends a short Adieu,
Impatient to be there.

Looking Upward, stanza 4 (1709)

Earth has detain'd me Prisoner long,
And I'm grown weary now;
My Heart, my Hand, my Ear, my Tongue,
There's nothing here for you.

Tir'd in my Thoughts I stretch me down,
And upward glance mine Eyes.
Upward, my Father, to thy Throne,
And to my native Skies.

Longing for Heaven, etc. stanzas 1, 2 (1705)

which/

which is almost an English version of The Excitation.

When will my Father's Chariot come?
Must ye for ever walk the Ethereal Round,
For ever see the Mourner lie
An Exile of the Sky,
A Prisoner of the Ground?
Descend some shining Servants from on high,
Build me a hasty Tomb...

Breathing toward the Heavenly Country,
lines 14-20, (1705).

This world-weariness hardly, if ever, appears in the Psalm Imitations. The healthy naturalism of the Hebrew Psalter saved Watts from indulging this almost Manichean mood, but it is not absent from the hymns of the second book of Hymns and Spiritual Songs, where Watts allows himself greater liberty in theme and treatment:

Raise thee, my Soul, fly up, and run
Thro' every heav'nly Street,
And say, There's nought below the Sun
That's worthy of thy Feet.

Hymn 33, Book 2, verse 1.

Father, I long, I faint to see
The Place of thine Abode,
I'd leave thy earthly Courts and flee
Up to thy Seat, my God.

Hymn 68, Book 2, verse 1.

And while our Faith enjoys this Sight,
We long to leave our Clay,
And wish thy fiery Chariot, Lord,
To fetch our Souls away.

Hymn 91, Book 2, verse 9.

Haste, my Beloved, fetch my Soul
Up to thy bless'd Abode;
Fly, for my Spirit longs to see
My Saviour and my God.

Hymn 75, Book 2, last verse.

It/

It should be added that this otherworldly strain in Watts' work, when it is healthy, shows itself as a yearning of the soul for the beatific vision, or for union with Christ who is its life and light.

2. The Poems of Divine Love constitute the second group of compositions that exerted an influence on Watts' later hymnody. Probably they represent his earliest English verse on Christian themes. In 1705 eight poems were ranged under the general title, An Essay on Divine Love in several following Odes, in Imitation of Solomon's Song. In 1709, the number was increased to twenty-one pieces. For their titles see the above Table.

Even the eight poems of the 1705 edition, which Watts presented as imitations of the Song of Songs, were not strictly so. The Hazard of Loving the Creatures, Bewailing my own Inconstancy are really based on the conflict between human and divine love, which had been the theme of John Norris's Plato's Two Cupids, The Exchange, and The Conquest, poems which Watts knew and admired. The Absence of the Beloved has its source both in the Song of Songs, and in the 18th century pastoral, which Watts spiritualizes. So does Sitting in an Arbour. Christ's Amazing Love, and my Amazing Coldness, Sick of Love, and Forsaken, yet hoping are perhaps more entirely imitations of Solomon's Song than the others. In every case Watts adopts St. Bernard's view of the individual soul, and not the Church, as the beloved of Christ.

In 1709, Watts altered the general title of this group of poems, and/

and omitted specific reference to the Song of Solomon. Now and again he reaches a high level of poetry and devotional feeling, as when in The Fairest and the Only Beloved, he writes:

Who could ever bear to be
Curst with Immortality
Among the Stars, but far from Thee?

We gather from the dating of Hope in Darkness, that Watts was dealing with the theme of Christ the Lover of the Soul as early as 1694. This group of poems really connects his work with the mystical verse of the seventeenth century (Chapt. 1). Its affiliations with Norris have been mentioned. Sarbiewski wrote poems based on Solomon's Song. Crashaw too, had written in the same strain. And Francis Quarles has a sequence of 'Sonnets' on the theme of Canticles, which takes the form of a dialogue between Christ and the Soul, represented as Bridegroom and Bride. The evangelical interpretation is reserved to footnotes. Several writers had paraphrased Solomon's Song for private and family meditation. In 1684, John Reeve published Spiritual Hymns upon Solomon's Song: or, Love in the right channel..... (which) may be vocally Sung in the Ordinary Tunes of the Singing Psalms." Reeve's book was dedicated "To the chaste and pure Virgin-Souls, that love the Lord Jesus Christ in Sincerity". Then follows a 'poem' in six verses which states the purpose of the paraphrase:

While you sing out your shame, we will incline
To sing the Praise of God's eternal Son,
We will in Psalms and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs
Outsing the Mirth obscene, which unto you belongs.

This/

This purpose Watts fully shares.

Joseph Stennett published an excellent paraphrase of Solomon's Song under the title of A Version of Solomon's Song of Songs. Together with The XLVth Psalm, in 1700. It was presumably written to be used in public worship, for in the Preface (p.XVII) Stennett writes:

"I have compos'd it in such a measure, and divided it into such parts as might render it fit and easy to be sung in the Worship of God".

The nuptial mysticism of the Song of Songs appears often in seventeenth-century preaching, especially amongst more ardent and devotionally minded Puritans like James Janeway. His discourse, Heaven upon Earth, largely draws on Canticles, and there are parts of it which might have influenced young Watts in some of his poems of Divine Love. For example, Watts two poems, Love to Christ present or absent and The Absence of the Beloved recall this passage by Janeway:

"Those that are acquainted with a spiritual life know... that sometimes there is a greater nearness of their souls to God; they know what it is for the soul to feel the approaches of God, and his smiles fill their souls with unspeakable comfort; and to feel God withdrawing from the soul, this clouds their joy and makes them go mourning. They can tell you at such a time they were brought unto his banqueting house, and his banner over them was love. They can tell you at such a time Christ came into his garden to eat his pleasant fruits; at such a time they heard the voice of their beloved saying, "Open to me, my sister, my spouse, my love. my dove, my undefiled". And when the soul hath neglected this knock of Christ to open to him, that then he hath withdrawn; "I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone". These things are the experiences of a precious child of God, which I fear are little felt and little known amongst us; but where these things are not there is no acquaintance with God".²⁷

The Song of Songs was a favourite book of the religious poets and preachers of the seventeenth century, and, in nothing so much as his own interest in it, does Watts show himself to be that century's spiritual child. The book went out of favour in the Age of Reason; Watts has to apologise in his 1736 preface to Horae for including this group of poems on Divine Love:

"Solomon's Song was much more in use amongst preachers and writers of divinity when these poems were written than it is now".

These poems are of interest to the student of Watts' ^{hymnology} chiefly for two reasons. First, they are the source of a group of hymns on the same subject.²⁸ And secondly, they represent the fusion of the two themes of the latin poems, (a) Christus Victor, and (b) the desire of the soul for union with Him, the latter theme coalescing with the Christus Sponsus idea of Canticles. Thus in these poems, two streams of classical theology meet and mingle; and Christ becomes the victorious Bridegroom of Soul and Church, their "dear Conqueror" and "bleeding Prince of Love". This union of ideas is the real source of the group of Sacramental Hymns in Hymns and Spiritual Songs.²⁹

Even in what is perhaps the earliest of the poems of Divine Love, Hope in Despair, written in 1694, the imagery and theology of the Lord's Supper emerge:

I was regal'd with heavenly Fare,
With Fruit and Manna from above;
Divinely sweet the Blessings were
While mine Emanuel was there;
And o'er my Head
The Conqueror spread
The Banner of his Love.

(stanza 3, lines 15ff.)

But/

But the hymns on the theme of Canticles are the true half-way house on the road to the Sacramental Hymns. Even their titles show that, Christ the King at his Table (Book 1, H.66), The Banquet of Love, (Book 1, H.68). Compare these titles with the title of one of the hymns in the group of Hymns for the Lord's Supper, The Triumphal Feast for Christ's Victory over Sin, and Death, and Hell (Book 3, H.21). And compare this verse from the best of the hymns on Canticles (Bk 1, H.74, v.8):

Jesus, we will frequent thy Board,
And sing the Bounties of our Lord;
But the rich Food on which we live
Demands more Praise than Tongues can give.

with these verses of one of the Sacramental hymns (Book 3, H.21, vv.11, 12):

Now you must triumph at my Feast,
And taste my Flesh, my Blood;
And live eternal Ages blest,
For 'tis immortal Food.

Victorious God! what can we pay
For Favours so divine!
We would devote our Hearts away
To be for ever thine.

Wherever the ideas of Christ the Victor and Christ the Lover coalesce in Watts' lyrics, you have the true ingredients of the Sacramental hymn;- the condescending love of the Prince of Glory; His triumph over Sin and Death by His Passion and Resurrection; His ardent love for and presence with the redeemed community, awakening the inexpressible love of the rescued soul; and the assurance of participation in/

in the great Marriage Feast in Heavenly Places. It is not surprising to find amongst the group of poems on Divine Love in Horae Lyricae the first attempt at a hymn for the Lord's Supper, A Preparatory Thought for the Lord's Supper.³⁰

That Watts owed something to his predecessors in the field of Sacramental hymnody cannot be denied.³¹ But it would be a great mistake to imagine that he was influenced mainly by external factors. The content of Watts' Christian verse, poems and hymns together, was of a piece, presenting a Zusammenhang, in which almost every poem and hymn coheres. Each species of psalm and hymn which Watts later produced is present from the beginning as a living cell within the organism of his work as a whole. It is this that constitutes one feature of his originality and genius.³²

Finally, it is interesting to note that the English hymnody of the nineteenth century that adopted the amatory imagery of the Song of Songs³³, and has been criticised for 'fondling Christ', was no exotic, but has a precedent in the many-sided work of Isaac Watts.

3. The Psalm Versions. This historically important group of Psalm imitations appeared in the first edition of Horae, and was left out of all later editions. We merely quote these little-known compositions now, and leave our comment upon them for chapter 6.

HORAE LYRICAE 1705 pp.54-62

An Essay on a few of David's Psalms Translated into Plain Verse, in Language more agreeable to the clearer Revelations of the Gospel.

The Happy Saint and Cursed Sinner.

Psalm 1.

i.

Blest is the Man, whose cautious Feet
Shun the broad Path which Sinners chuse,
Who hates the House where Atheists meet,
And dreads the Words that Scoffers use.

ii.

He loves t'employ his Morning Light
Reading the Statutes of the Lord,
And spends the wakeful hours of Night
With Pleasure pond'ring o're the Word.

iii.

He like a Plant by gentle Streams
Shall Flourish in immortal Green;
And Heav'n will shine with Kindest Beams
On every Work his hands begin.

iv.

But Sinners find their Counsels cross'd:
As Chaff before the Tempest flies,
So shall their Hopes be blown and lost
When the last Trumpet shakes the Skies.

v.

In vain the Rebel crouds (sic) to stand
In Judgment with the Pious Race;
The Dreadful Judge with Stern Command
Divines him to a different place.

vi./

70.

vi.

"Strait is the Way my Saints have trod,
"I blest the Path and drew it plain:
"But you would chuse the crooked Road,
"And it leads down t'Eternal Pain.

Doubt and Fears Suppres'd.

Psalm iii.

i.

Look, Gracious God, how numerous they
Whose envious Power and Rage
Conspiring my Eternal Death
Against my Soul engage.

ii.

The Lying Tempter would perswade
There's no Relief in Heaven;
And all my swelling Sins appear
Too big to be forgiven.

iii.

But God my Glory and my Strength
Shall tread the Tempter down,
And drown my Sins beneath the Blood
Of his Dear Dying Son.

iv.

I cry'd, and from his Sacred Hill
He bow'd a list'ning Ear;
I call'd my Father and my God,
And he dispers'd my Fear.

v.

He threw soft Slumbers on mine Eyes
In sight of all my Foes,
I 'woke, and wondered at the Grace
That guarded my Repose.

vi/

71.

vi.

What, tho' the Hosts of Death and Hell
All arm'd against me stood,
Terrors no more shall shake my Soul,
Nor Tremblings chill my Blood.

vii.

Lord, I adore thy Wondrous Love,
And thy Salvation sing:
My God hath broke the Serpent's Teeth,
And Death has lost his Sting.

viii.

Salvation to the Lord belongs,
The Lord alone can save;
Blessings attend thy People here,
And reach beyond the Grave.

Praise to the Lord from All Nations.

Psalm C

i.

Sing to the Lord with Joyful Voice,
Let every Land his Name adore,
The Brittish Isles shall send the Noise
Across the Ocean to the Shore.

ii.

With gladness bow before his Throne,
And let his Presence raise your Joys,
Know that the Lord is God alone,
And form'd our Souls, and fram'd our Voice.

iii.

Infinite Power without our Aid
Figur'd our Clay to humane Mould;
And when our Wandring Feet had stray'd,
He brought us to his Sacred Fold.

iv/

72.

iv.

Enter his Gates with Thankful Songs,
Thro' his Wide Courts your Voices raise;
Almighty God, our Joyful Tongues
Shall fill thine house with sounding Praise.

v.

Wide as the World is thy Command,
Vast as Eternity thy Love,
Firm as a Rock thy Truth must stand
When rolling Years shall cease to move.

Brotherly Love.

Psalm CXXXIII

i.

Lo, what an entertaining Sight
Are Brethren that agree,
Brethren whose cheerful Hearts unite
In Bands of piety.

ii.

When Streams of Love from Christ the Spring
Descend to every Soul,
And Sacred Peace with Balmy Wing
Shades and bedews the whole;

iii.

'Tis like the Oyl on Aaron shed
Which choice Perfumes compose,
Down softly from his Reverend Head
It trickled to his Toes.

iv.

'Tis pleasant as the Morning Dews
That fall on Zion's Hill;
Where God his mildest Glory shews,
And makes his Grace distil.

FINIS

4. Lyrics and 'hybrid' Hymns. This is the last and longest group
of/

of compositions in Horae Lyricae.

The original edition had 22 pieces in this group, 2 lyrics and 20 'hybrid' hymns.

By 1709, the number had increased to 55, 19 lyrics and 36 'hybrid' hymns.

Only the 'hybrids', i.e., those pieces that are neither strictly speaking poems nor hymns, concern us here. They show the kind of work Watts was producing in his transitional period, and the themes that were engrossing his attention.

These 'hybrids', according to the year in which they appeared, are:

1705		1709
The Divine Sovereignty	title changed to	Asking Leave to Sing.
The Transcendent Glories of the Deity.	"	The Creator and Creatures.
God appears most Glorious in our Salvation by Christ.	"	God Glorious and Sinners Saved.
A Hymn of Praise to the God of England, etc.	"	A Hymn of Praise for three great Salvations.
Sickness gives a Sight of Heaven.	"	A Sight of Heaven in Sickness.
The Universal Hallelujah	"	The Universal Hallelujah.
The Love of Christ on his Cross and on his Throne.	"	(Transposed to poems of Divine Love.)
Death a Welcome Messenger.	"	The Welcome Messenger.
Sincere Praise	"	Sincere Praise.
God's Infinity	"	The Infinite.
Longing/		

Longing for the second coming of Christ.	title changed to	(Transposed to group of poems of Divine Love).
Confession and Pardon	"	Confession and Pardon.
Jesus the only Saviour.	"	Jesus the only Saviour.
The Pleasures of Love to Christ present or absent.	"	(Transposed to poems on Divine Love).
A Sight of Christ.	"	"
Longing for Heaven, or the Song of Angels above.	"	The Song of Angels above.
God Sovereign and Gracious	"	Sovereignty and Grace.
The Law and Gospel	"	The Law and Gospel.
The Death of Moses, etc.	"	(Transposed to poems on Divine Love).
		God exalted above all Praise.
		Worshipping with Fear.
		Felicity Above.
		God's Dominion and Decrees.
		The Nativity of Christ.
		The Penitent pardoned.
		Death and Eternity.
		The Atheist's Mistake.
		Remember your Creator.
		Sun, Moon and Stars, praise ye the Lord.
		A Song to Creating Wisdom.
		Condescending Grace.
		The/

The Comparison and Complaint.

God Supreme and Self-sufficient.

Looking upward.

Christ Dying, Rising and Reigning.

The God of Thunder.

The Farewell.

God only known to himself.

Pardon and Sanctification.

Happy Frailty.

A Prospect of the Resurrection.

A comparison of these 'hybrid' hymns with the compositions in the second book of Hymns and Spiritual Songs, reveals similarities in subject and treatment. Themes such as the Divine Perfections, meditations on the glory of Heaven, the Law and the Gospel, and the character of Christ appear frequently in both. Some of the subjects appear later in the Psalms of David Imitated. The examination of these hybrid hymns leads us to think that Horae Lyricae is the workshop in which we see young Watts fashioning, discarding and refashioning his material until at last he produces the modern English hymn. Lastly, in compositions like Remember your Creator, Sun, Moon and Stars, praise ye the Lord, A Song to Creating Wisdom, The Comparison and Complaint (last verse) are ideas to be developed later in Watts' Divine/

Divine Songs for children. Wesley was the first to use two of these as hymns: The Glories of God Exceed all Worship, and A Song to Creating Wisdom.

Of the hybrid hymns listed above, The Nativity of Christ, "Shepherds, rejoice, lift up your Eyes", Condescending Grace, "When the Eternal bows the Skies", Jesus the only Saviour which originally began, "Adam, our Head, our Father fell", Christ dying, rising and reigning, which commenced "He dies! the heav'nly Lover dies", and God appears most Glorious in our Salvation by Christ, "Father, how wide thy Glory shines" were first added to Watts' Psalms and Hymns in 1786 (cf. Chapt. 7).

Subsequently, others were included in the corpus of Watts hymns for public use. These were:

Confession and Pardon, "Alas, my aching Heart".

Sun, Moon, and Stars, praise ye the Lord, "Fairest of all the Lights above".

The Transcendent Glories of the Deity, "God is a Name my Soul adores".

A Prospect of the Resurrection, "How long shall Death the Tyrant reign".

God's Dominion and Decrees, "Keep Silence, all created Things!".

The Death of Moses, etc., "Lord, 'tis an Infinite Delight".

The Pleasures of Love to Christ present or absent, "Of all the joys we Mortals know".

Sickness gives a Sight of Heaven, "Oft have I sat in Secret Sighs".

The/

The Universal Hallelujah, "Praise ye the Lord each Heavenly Tongue".

God's Infinity, "Some Seraph, lend your Heavenly Tongue".

Looking upward, "The Heavens invite mine Eye".

God Sovereign and Gracious, "The Lord! how fearful is his Name".

God Supreme and Self-sufficient, "What is our God, or what his Name".

Longing for the Second Coming of Christ, "When shall thy shining Face
be seen".

Worshipping with Fear, "Who dares attempt th'Eternal Name".

A complete list of all the hymns in Horae, with their original first lines and titles, and the date of their publication is given in the Appendix, p.74.

It has been said above that insufficient bibliographical knowledge of the early editions of Horae Lyricae has resulted in inaccuracies in date and title of a number of Watts' earliest hymns. Dr. Julian is largely responsible for these errors, and other students of Watts have copied them from his monumental Dictionary of Hymnology.

We will close the chapter with a few examples.

Julian on page 14, does not know that the original first line of Watts' Jesus the only Saviour, 1705, was "Adam, our Head, our Father fell", and not, "Adam, our Father and our Head". (cf. Horae Lyricae, 1705, p.48).

Again, Julian (p.318) says that the original title of the hymn beginning "Earth has detain'd me Prisoner long", 1705, was The Song of Angels above. That was the 1709 title. In the first edition it was/

was called, Longing for Heaven, or, The Song of Angels above. Horae Lyricae, p.70.

Again, in his annotations on the hymn "Eternal Power! whose high Abode" (p.356) Julian is in error when he says that the 1705 title was God exalted above all Praise. That was the title in the second and subsequent editions. The original title was The Glories of God exceed all Worship. (cf. Horae Lyricae, 1705, p.110)

On p.357, Julian makes another serious mistake when he includes "Eternal Wisdom, thee we praise" (A Song to Creating Wisdom) in the first edition of Horae Lyricae. Actually, it did not appear until 1709.

In his notes on "Father how wide thy Glory shines" (p.367) Julian again gives the amended title of 1709, thinking that it is original. The earlier title was not God glorious and Sinners saved, but God appears most Glorious in our Salvation by Christ. (cf. Horae Lyricae, 1705, p.7).

Lastly, on page 432 of his Dictionary, Julian says that the hymn "God is a Name my Soul adores" (1705) was originally entitled The Creator and Creatures. That was the title in the second edition. In 1705, it is called The Transcendent Glories of the Deity. (Cf. Horae Lyricae, 1705, p.4.)

Notes.Chapter 2

- ¹ Wither, George, Hymns and Songs of the Church, with an introduction by Edward Farr, London, 1895. Introduction, p.XXIV.

Cf. Chapter 3, below, The Zone of Hymn-writing, for similarities between the work of Wither and Watts.

- ² Memorable Affairs in my Life appended to E. Paxton Hood, Isaac Watts: His Life and Writings....London, 1875.

- ³ See Chapter 1, above.

- ⁴ Cf. Davis, Arthur Paul, Isaac Watts His Life and Works, New York, 1943

In the Bibliography, item 1, p.271, Davis refers to the original edition as having three books.

Julian, John, A Dictionary of Hymnology, London, 1892.

On p.1237, the first item in the list of Watts' works is referred to as having three books, when in reality there were two in the first edition of Horae.

In annotating Eternal Power, whose High Abode (p.356) Julian says: "This hymn supplies what the author called The Conclusion to his Horae Lyricae, 1705". This is the title of the hymn in the second edition: the original title was, The Glories of God exceed all Worship.

See the present chapter below, for further examples of incorrect annotations in Julian.

- ⁵ "There is so large a Difference between (the two editions) in the Change of Titles, Lines, and whole Poems, as well as in various Transpositions, that 'twould be useless and endless, and all Confusion, for any Reader to compare them throughout. The Additions also make up almost half the Book, and some of these have need of as many Alterations as the former". Preface to Horae Lyricae, 2nd ed., 1709.

- ⁶ Cf. Table and analysis in the present chapter below.

- ⁷ Cf. Chapt. 1, above.

- ⁸ This view of poetry is expressed also in Milton's preface to the second Book of Church Government:
 (Poetic gifts) are of power, beside the office of a pulpit, to inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue," etc.
 (Select Prose works of Milton ed. St. John, London, 1836, vol.1,p.13)
- ⁹ The attitude of the Puritan to the writing of poetry is fully dealt with in Grierson, H.J.C., Cross Currents in English Literature of the XVIIth Century, London, 1929, Chapt. VI, Humanism and the Churches. The cleavage between the aesthetic and the evangelical is a recurring theme in the writings of Dora Greenwell. Cf. Two Friends, 1862, pp.48-52, Liber Humanitatis, 1875, pp.123-124, 127, 135, 140-44.
- ¹⁰ The complete passage is quoted in German in Dr. M. Luthers Geistliche Lieder, London, 1845, pp.X-XI.
- ¹¹ Goostly Psalmes and Spirituall Songes, by Miles Coverdale (1539?) The preface, in expressing the motives that produced it, echoes the commonplace so frequent among translators of the Psalms:
 "Would God...our carters and ploughmen (had none) other thing to whistle upon save psalms...and that women...spinning at the wheel had none other songs...they should be better occupied than with hey nony nony, hey trolly loly".
Ane Compendious Buik of Godlie Psalms and Spirituall Sangis, collectit furthe of sundrie partes of the Scripture (1546) by John and Robert Wedderburn. Cf. Julian, op. cit., p.1021; Millar Patrick, Four Centuries of Scottish Psalmody, 1949, p.5.
- Cf. Chapt. 3 below.
- ¹² Cf. Taylor Collection of Psalm Versions, Aberdeen, TR.1, 578w.
- ¹³ The Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland Bulletin, April 1945, p.4.
- ¹⁴ Cf. prefaces to Sam. Woodford's A Paraphrase upon the Psalms of David (1667), and Richard Baxter's Paraphrase on the Psalms of David in Metre, With other Hymns (1692).

¹⁵ For Milton's adoption of this purpose see Chapt. 1, above.
For Drayton, Wither, Baxter, etc. cf. chapt. 3, below.

¹⁶ Cf. Nahum Tate, On the Present Corrupted State of Poetry, 1684
Jeremy Collier, Short View, 1698.
John Dennis, The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, 1701.
The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry, 1704.

In the latter Dennis writes:

"...I have reason to believe, that one of the principle Reasons that has made the modern Poetry so contemptible, is, That by divesting it self of Religion, it is fallen from its Dignity, and its original Nature and Excellence; and from the greatest Production of the Mind of Man, is dwindled to an extravagant and vain Amusement."

¹⁷ "The Church, which was once the mother of poets no less than of saints, during the last two centuries has relinquished to aliens the chief glories of poetry...The palm and the laurel...sanctity and song, grew together in her soil: she has retained the palm, but forgone the laurel.....Once poetry was, as she should be, the lesser sister and helpmate of the Church; the minister to the mind, as the Church to the soul. But poetry sinned, poetry fell; and, in place of lovingly reclaiming her, Catholicism cast her from the door to follow the feet of her pagan seducer".
(Shelley by Francis Thompson, 2nd ed. 1909, pp. 17- 8).

¹⁸ See Chapt. 1, above, note 41.

¹⁹ See Chapt. 1, above.

²⁰ A Collection of Miscellanies: Consisting of Poems, Essays, Discourses and Letters, Occasionally Written. By John Norris, Rector of Bemerton, 4th ed. London, 1706.

Norris's influence on Watts during this period of apprenticeship is wide and pervasive. In addition to the similarities between the two which have already been mentioned, it is interesting to notice that Watts' preface to Hymns and Spiritual Songs (1707) echoes the sense and even the phraseology of Norris's "Discourse concerning the Excellency of Praise and Thanksgiving" (Practical Discourses upon Several Divine Subjects, 15th ed. 1728, 85ff.) In that discourse/

discourse he writes:

" 'Tis a sad thing to consider that so Divine and so Angelical a Service as that of Praise....which is so highly preferred in the Sacred Writings...should be so neglected and so little regarded as it is: That that which is so much the imployment and business of Heaven, should be so little valued upon Earth, and what the Angels esteem so Divine a Service, should have so little share in the Devotions of Men...and those that have a considerable sense of it, are generally very backward to the Duty, and very cold in the Performance. Our Necessities often call us to our Prayers, and supply us with Devotion in them; but as for Praise, it seems a dead and heartless Service, and we care not how seldom or how indifferently it be performed".

Norris, despite a great love of music, remained a conservative in Church praise, and greatly admired the prose psalms and the New Testament hymns. He wrote no hymns himself, but two pieces in An Essay Towards the Theory of the Ideal or Intelligible World, "Lay down proud heart thy rebel arms" p.174, and "Sing, then ye blest attendants on His throne", p.561, approach very closely to the hymn style.

Norris probably influenced Watts in his group of poems in Horae on the theme of Divine Love. This was a favourite subject of Norris's writings both in verse and prose. Cf. Miscellanies, Letters Concerning the Love of God, and Reason and Religion, etc. Pt. 2. Contemplations III and IV, pp.135-154.

We find also in Norris the criticism of the ethical standards of classical authors which Watts whole-heartedly adopted, Cf. Norris's Reflections upon the Conduct of Human Life", in Treatises upon Several Subjects....(1697) pp.249-259. On p.253 we have perhaps the source of Watts' attack in the preface to Horae Lyricae on the unreality of classical stories.

Watts' attack on mere custom and prejudice in his Prefaces may owe something to Norris's example. In his words to the reader in "Reason and Religion" Norris criticises scholastic education, and makes a plea for "liberty of thinking". There is much in Norris which is in alignment with the educational ideas of the dissenting academies.

Like him again, Watts stresses the need for the inflamed heart as well as the instructed mind. Cf. To The Reader in "Reason and Religion".

²¹ The quotation reads,
 Cui Mens Divinior, atque Os
 Magna Locuturum.

²² Too laudatory claims have been made by modern students of Watts for his importance as a poet, and his significance in the history of English literature. While accepting the view that Watts has not received sufficient recognition as a minor poet, we think his real significance rests in his hymnological work. Pinto and Davis, in their desire to be 'modern', have given too little attention to the study and appraisal of Watts' hymnological output.

²³ Poems and hymns with early dates were incorporated in the 2nd edition of Horae Lyricae, 1709, and Reliquiae Juveniles, 1734 has one poem at least written in 1694 (cf. "On the sight of Queen Mary in the year 1694" No.XV.) And another written in August 1692 (cf. No.XXXVIII). Another No.XXXIX was written in Southampton 1695. It also includes "The first Lyrick Hour" a stanza from Casimire imitated in English (No.11).

²⁴ Cf. note 5, above.

²⁵ We have tried to do this in Chapt. 6, below.

²⁶ Stanzas 19-21.

²⁷ Works of Puritan Divines. James Janeway. London, 1847, p.45.

²⁸ Cf. Hymns and Spiritual Songs 1707, Bk. 1, hymns 66-78.

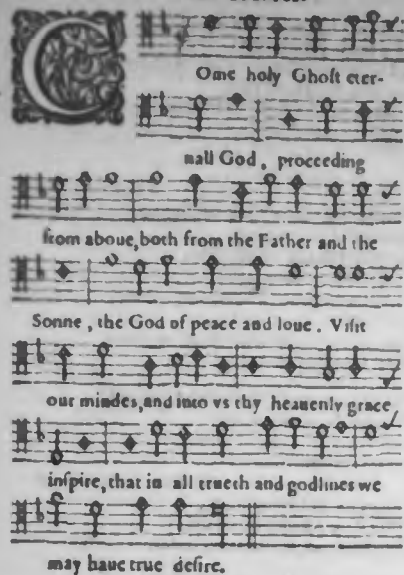
²⁹ Cf. Hymns and Spiritual Songs 1707-9, Bk. 3.

³⁰ Cf. Horae Lyricae 1709.

³¹ Cf. Chapt. 3, below.

³² Cf. Chapt. 9, below.

Veni Creator.



Thou art the very comforter
in all woe and distresse:
The heavenly gift of God most high,
which no tongue can expresse.
The fountaine and the luely spring
of my celestiall:
The fire so bright, the loue so cleare,
and vnction spirituall,

Thou in thy gifts are manifold,
whereby Christs Church doth stand,
In faithfull hearts writing thy Law
the finger of Gods hand.
According to thy promise made,
thou giuest speech of grace:
That through thy helpe the praise of God
may stand in euery place.

O holy Ghost into our minds
send downe thy heavenly light:
Kindle our hearts with seruent loue,
to serue God day and night.
Strength and stablish all our weaknesse
so feeble and so fraile,
That neither flesh, the world nor diuell,
against vs doe preuaile,

Put backe our enemies farre from vs,
and graunt vs to obtaine:
Peace in our hearts with God and man,
without grudge or disdain.
And grant O Lord, that thou being
our leader and our guide:
We may eschew the snares of sinne,
and from thee neuer slide.

To vs such plenty of thy grace,
good Lord grant we thee pray:
That thou maist be our comforter
at the last dreadfull day.
Of all strife and dissension
O Lord dissolve the bands:

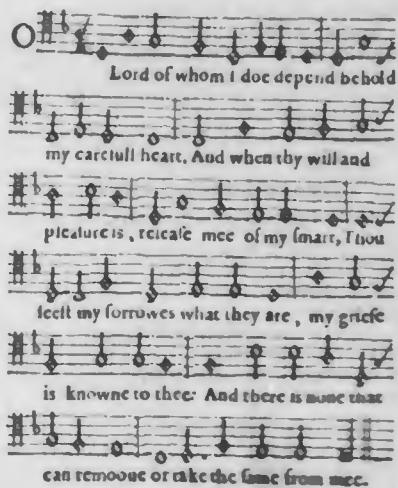
The humble suite of a Sinner.

And make the knots of peace and loue,
throughout all Christian Lands

Grant vs O Lord, through thee to know,
the Father most of might:
That of his deare beloued sonne,
we may attaine the sight.
And that with perfect faith also,
we may acknowledge thee:
The spirit of them both alway,
one God in persons three.

Laud and praise be to the Father,
and to the sonne equall:
And to the holy spirit also,
one God coeternall.
And pray we that thy onely Sonne,
vouchsafe his spirit to send.
To all that doe professe his name,
vnto the worlds end.

The humble suite of a Sinner.



But onely thou whose aide I crase,
whose mercy still is prest:
To ease all those that come to thee,
for succour and for rest.
And sith thou seest my restless euer,
my teares and grieuous grone:
Attend vnto my suite O Lord,
marke well my plaint and mone.

For sinne hath so inclosed me,
and compasse me about,
That I am now remedlesse,
if mercy helpe not out:
For mortall man cannot expresse,
or mitigate this paine:
But euen thy Christ my Lord and God,
which for my sinne was slaine.

Whose bloody wounds are yet to see,
though not with mortall eye:

PAGE FROM EARLY EDITION OF THE OLD VERSION,
illustrating its hymnic nucleus.

CHAPTER 3THE ZONE OF HYMN-WRITING

The Reformation restored to the people the right to worship God in their own tongue. The growth of a vernacular psalmody or hymnody, or a combination of the two, was its almost immediate result. Speaking roughly, Calvin favoured a rigid adherence to a metrical rendering of the Psalms. Luther, more liberal where music and the arts were concerned in worship, allowed the use of hymns, and gave a lead by writing them.¹ Both England and Scotland were at first attracted to the Lutheran ideal of praise: Coverdale and the Wedderburns introduced versions of German psalms and hymns in the common language of their respective countries.² And though neither of these early hymn collections was authorised for use in Church, each enjoyed a wide popularity. And even after Genevan influence had determined that metrical psalmody, after the pattern of Marot in France and Sternhold in England, should be the staple of congregational sung praise, there was for a period, and then intermittently, a harking back to the earlier Lutheran type of hymnody of which Britain had had an exhilarating foretaste.

This tendency is a purely English phenomenon: Scotland under/

under the leadership of Knox adopted Calvin's standards of church praise, but in England there was an attempt at compromise between the two types, which is seen in the editions of the Old Version between 1559 and 1562. Prefixed and appended to these are growing nuclei of Scripture and liturgical paraphrases and original hymns.³

This Lutheran influence ceases with the 1562 edition; and the tyranny of the metrical psalm begins, and is to last till the end of the next century. At the same time, there is evidence in the work of the Elizabethan poets and the tentative hymn-writing of men like Drayton, Wither and Baxter that the nucleus of hymns in the Old Version offered a loophole for a return to something more like the Lutheran ideal of worship-song. That hymnic nucleus was the Achilles heel of the Psalmodic despotism.

1.

Despite the repressive tendency of the metrical psalm in worship, there arose a native school of devotional poets, who discovered, though slowly, the difference between a poem intended for private reading, and a hymn written to be sung publicly. The pattern of the metrical psalm stanza, which some adopted, acted as a disciplinary medium, through which they moved away from lyrical to hymnic forms of writing. And so an age of semi-hymnic verse shades off imperceptibly into what George MacDonald calls the Zone of Hymn-writing.⁴ And in the process a form and technique of hymnic verse is prepared, to be adopted and perfected in the mature work of Isaac Watts.

We/

We shall select a few illustrations of this trend towards hymn content and structure in the work of the religious poets, and then show how, in Wither and Baxter, it unites with a new interest in the body of hymns in the Old Version, to prepare the way for the epoch-making work of Watts.

Edward Farr's selections from the Elizabethan poets offer clear evidence of the activity of a school of poets, who might have written hymns of distinction, if the strong hand of Calvin had not warded off such productions from the Church⁵. George Gascoigne's Good Morrowe⁶ lies on the border-line between a devotional meditation and a hymn. John Norden's, Before we go to bed, written round about 1600, was apparently intended for communal singing.

Oh Father full of might and love,
Our castle and our stay,
Who rulest with thy power above
The darkesome night and day.

The day is thine, the night also
Thou rulest with thy hand;
Both which were made for man we know,
And so was sea and land.

The sea and land, and all the things
Therein which thou hast plast,
Thou gavest us, and made us kings,
To use them till the last.

Which blessings, Lord, this day we have
Most richly had from thee.
Bless eke this night, good Lord, we crave;
Keep us from danger free.

Preserve us when our drowsie sleepe
Our bodies shall possesse,
And let not Sathan creepe into,
Nor our poore souls oppresse.

But/

But let thy grace prevent his ire;
Let nothing us annoy;
Let faith prevaile, let him retire,
And we good rest enjoy.⁷

This is definitely not poetry. The influence of Sternhold's language and metrical psalm-stanza is clearly evinced. There is also the same stepping down from lyrical preciousness to the comprehension of simple folk, and the same occasional straining after a rhyme. But in spite of poetic deficiency and technical faults, these verses show a sense of structure - what we call later with reference to the work of Watts, an architectonic quality. They constitute a unity of thought and form, the latter being achieved, as the italicised words and phrases show, by the repetition of words or ideas as the writer progresses from stanza to stanza. Watts was a supreme artist in his use of this method of stanza weaving, though his technique is more concealed. It is interesting to find Norden experimenting with it, a century or more before Watts wrote his hymns.

William Hunnis,⁸ who died in 1597, was the author of Seven Sobs of a Sorrowfull Soule for Sinne. His work is characterised by a fervour and simplicity. Glass thinks that his Meditation when ye go to Bed, may be the first metrical Evening Hymn written after the invention of printing.⁹ Hunnis's directness and sense of hymn-structure are best seen in A Psalm of Reioising for the Woonderfull Love of Christ, which begins,

Let/

Let us be glad, and clap our hands,
 With ioie our soules to fill;
 For Christ hath paid the price of sinne,
 With mercie and good will.¹⁰

In his work on the Psalter Hunnis shows an early tendency to "~~Christianize~~" individual psalms, and thus has a tenuous link with Watts.¹¹

Michael Drayton, 1563-1631, has a place in the history of the evolution of the English hymn. Besides, he did something to extend the range of hymn-writing. The Harmonie of the Church...¹², which he published in 1591, contains 19 items: 10 "Spirituell Songes and Holy Hymnes", comprising paraphrases of songs and prayers in the Old Testament, together with 4 original hymns; and 9 "Other Songes or Praiers out of the bookes of Apocripha". In his preface "To the Curteous Reader" Drayton gives expression to the then commonplace purpose of spiritualizing the songs of the people, almost in the manner of Watts' preface to Horae Lyricae¹³ (see chapt. 2 above). Perhaps the chief significance of this book lies in its influence upon the work of George Wither.¹⁴ In Drayton at his best vigour, dignity and a sense of structure are seen:

Wherefore with joy out of the well of life
 Draw foorth sweet water which it dooth affoord:
 And in the day of trouble and of strife
 Call on the name of God the living Lord.

Extol his works and woonders to the sunne,
 Unto al people let his praise be showne;
 Record in song the mervails he hath done,¹⁵
 And let his glorie through the world be blowne.

Drayton's/

Drayton's verse moves with too heavy a tread for popular use, and his subjects sometimes are too recondite.

The greatest name in this period of tentative hymn-writing is George Wither,¹⁶ 1588-1667. More than any of his predecessors, and most of his successors, he realised what were the essential qualities and requirements of a good hymn.¹⁷ He widened the scope of English hymnody, and as "one born out of due time", produced the first hymn-book in alignment with the liturgy of the Anglican Church.¹⁸ Had his work been received favourably, the development of our native hymnody would have taken on a different character. But Wither failed to commend his hymns to the Church, although James I had granted a patent for their publication, along with every copy of the Old Version. The Company of the Stationers, who held the monopoly of the metrical psalter, accused Wither of lining his own pocket out of the praises of God. and declared that his hymns were unworthy "to keep company with David's Psalms". Their opposition carried the day,¹⁹ and when Wither wrote his next collection of hymns he reverted, as his predecessors had done, to writing versified meditations for private and family use.

Wither's hymnological ideas have some general features of similarity to those of Watts. He sets them forth in a curious prose tract, The Scholars Purgatory, 1624.²⁰ His aim in publishing his Hymns was twofold:

(1) To supplant profane ballads in the esteem of the people by/

by Christian Songs.

"We see the flesh and the Devil having for their service thousands of vain songs and profane ballads stored up in the stationers' warehouses....to the building up of the kingdom of sin and Satan....Yet there having been for divers ages together, but so many Hymns composed and published, as make in some impressions not above two sheets and a half of paper."²¹

Presumably Wither was referring to the hymns in the Old Version.

Notice how Watts shared Wither's propagandist aim, when he published his own poems in 1705.²²

(2) For the edification of the Church. Wither does not regard his hymns as part of the Anglican liturgy. At the same time, the purpose of their being annexed, by royal appointment, to such a widely-distributed book as the Singing Psalms, was that their Church teaching (neglected by many pastors) "might be more generally and more conveniently divulged" among the people.²³ Watts had the same aim of edification - though with a different Church background (Chapt.7)

That Wither designed his first book of hymns for Church use, and not merely for private meditation, seems to be clear from his Scholars Purgatory. My hymns, he protests

"are as fit to keep company with David's Psalms as Robert Wisdom's Turk and Pope ²⁴ and those other apocryphal Songs and Prayers, which the Stationers add to the Psalm-Book."²⁵

This would seem to imply that the first attempt in England to supply a vernacular hymn-book originated from the example of the small body of paraphrases and hymns added to the metrical psalter.

But/

But there is further evidence that Wither designed his book for the use of the Church. This appears in his criticism (and very early criticism too)²⁶ of Sternhold and Hopkins. On p.XXV of Farr's excerpts from the Scholars Purgatory, Wither writes:

"No man will grudge the annexing of the Book of Hymns to our metrical Psalms now used, in regard of any faultiness in their expression, if they consider the meanness of that translation".

And he continues, almost in the strain of Watts three quarters of a century later,

"No man of understanding can sing many of those Psalms, but with trouble to his devotion"(p.XXV).

Wither also makes a plea for the language-reform of the metrical Psalter,²⁷ which became a live issue only forty years afterwards. His intention to provide a hymn-book for congregational use seems as clear as day-light, when he adds (p.XXVIII),

"I wonder what divine calling Hopkins and Sternhold had more than I have, that their metrical Psalms may be allowed of rather than my Hymns".

George Wither is the great submerged peak of English Hymnology. And some general characteristics thought to be original to Isaac Watts, are really to be found in the personality and work of Wither. He has the same aggressive attitude and fearless aim as Watts. He too sought a language and idiom understandable by the ordinary worshippers of his day:

"As in the language, so in the sorts of verse, I have affected plainness, that I might the more profit them/

them who need such helps: this I have done also, that they may be sung to the common tunes of the Psalms...".²⁸

Compare that passage with Watts' preface to his Hymns and Spiritual Songs, 1707, p.VIII., Appendix, p.36.

Wither, like Watts, tackled his task, humanly speaking, almost unaided.

"In all these compositions I have made use of no man's method or meditation but mine own." ²⁹

And the two hymnists prosecuted their labours with ardour, conscience and thoroughness, and though they had friends and supporters, there was much active opposition to be met.

Even a desultory reading of Wither's Hymns and Songs of the Church and Hallelujah reveals how much he increased the range of the English hymn. And though the hymns in the second volume were not intended for church use they did undoubtedly indicate new directions to later writers.³⁰ Hallelujah includes patriotic hymns which remind us of Watts' lyrics and 'naturalized psalms'. Wither states in the prefatory words to his hymn For a Briton,

"We that are Britons enjoy many peculiar privileges and have obtained sundry blessings and deliverances famously observable: we are therefore obliged to a special thankfulness, not only as we are Christian men, but as we are Britons also; and this Hymn intends the furtherance of that duty".

Watts might have written that, and the sentiment of the Hymn itself has many an echo in Watts' poems and psalm imitations:

When that blessed light arose
Which dispelled death's black shade,
She was of the first of those
Who thereof was partner made.....(v. 3).
God/

God Almighty so provides,
That likewise to guard her lands,
She hath clouds, and winds, and tides,
Calms and storms, and shelves, and sands. (v. 4).

Wither, like Watts, regards Britain as a modern ISRAEL - the favoured nation of God:

When our Deborah arose,
And God's Isr'el judged here;
When confederated foes
Did invincible appear;
Spain's proud Sisera had thought
To have sunk us with his weight,
But the stars against him fought,
And made famous eighty-eight
Hallelujah therefore cry
Till heav'ns vaulted roof reply. (v. 6).

Watts adopts this very method, only the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, and the accession to the throne of Britain of kings like William III and George I, are now regarded as God's mighty acts of favour to His modern Israel.³¹

To change the topic, Watts' incomparable Cradle Hymn, which was number VIII of the enlarged collection of the Moral Songs, (chapt. 8) was based on Wither's Rocking Hymns (Hallelujah Part 1, Hymn 50). Probably Watts knew the other hymns in Hallelujah,³² written for scholars and young persons.

Important as these similarities between the two pioneer hymnologists^{dest.} are, they do not constitute the real link between George Wither and Isaac Watts. It is their grasp of the science of hymn-writing that brings these two poets, separated in time and aim, into surprising rapprochement. Before Watts, no writer had had so fine a sense/

sense of the architectonic quality required alike by hymns and hymn-books as Wither. And this despite the fact that Wither wrought in different material from Watts, and with a different liturgical purpose. Who, for instance, (Watts excepted), knew better than George Wither the watchfulness and discipline that hymn-writing demanded?

"If it be well weighed how full of short sentences and sudden breakings off those Scriptures are; how frequently these particles, for, but, and such like, which are graceful in the original text, will seem to obscure the dependency of sense in the English phrase, if the power of their signification be not heedfully observed in these places: how harsh the music will be, if the chief pauses be not carefully reduced into the same place in the line throughout the whole Hymn, which they have in the first stanza; how many differences must be observed between Lyric Verse, and that which is composed for reading only: how the Translator is tied not to make choice of those fashion stanzas, which are easiest to express the matter in, but to keep that with which he first began:I say, if all these circumstances be well considered (and how difficult they make it to close up every stanza with a period, or some such point that the voice may decently pause there), I am persuaded a work of this nature, could not have been persisted in, to this conclusion, by a man having so many weaknesses and discouragements as I have had; unless the Almighty had been with him."³³

Young Watts, more than a long life-time later, discovered the same difficulties in his own experimental work, and recorded some of them in his 'laboratory note-books':.

"...I have aimed at ease of Numbers and Smoothness of Sound, and endeavour'd to make the Sense plain and obvious; if the Verse appears so gentle and flowing as to incur the Censure of Feebleness, I may honestly affirm that sometimes it cost me labour to make it so!"³⁴

George Herbert, 1593-1633, the next significant figure, represents the Metaphysical School of devotional poets, Donne, Crashaw and others/

others, in its impact upon hymnody.³⁵ He is par excellence the poet of the Anglican Church and Liturgy. But the lyrics of his Temple,³⁶ while full of "heart-work and Heaven-work", as Richard Baxter described them, were too much overlaid with quaintnesses and conceits, and often too private, for use in public worship. The Temple is a book which no Puritan could possibly have written: Herbert sought his inspiration mostly from sources that were anathema to Dissent. Coleridge was right when he said that the appreciative reader of Herbert must be

"an affectionate and dutiful child of the Church, and from habit, conviction, and a constitutional predisposition to ceremoniousness, in piety as in manners, find her forms and ordinances aids of religion, not sources of formality."³⁷

Herbert's verses were early adopted by the Religious Societies, passing into their hymn-collections, and thence into the hymnody of Methodism. The variety and intricacy of their stanza forms, however, hindered their use in worship, and so, in 1697, part of The Temple was transcribed into Common Metre.³⁸ And via this C.M. version a few of Herbert's poems passed into the early hymn-collections of Dissent, to be ousted quite soon by the liturgically more fitting productions of Watts.

The abiding influence of Herbert upon Nonconformist hymnody in this period did not come directly from his Temple, even in its metrical paraphrase, but in a more circuitous way, through the hymns of John/

John Mason and the poems of Richard Baxter. Watts' poems, hymns and psalms bear traces of a fondness for Herbert and the Metaphysical poets - an infatuation which was deleterious to his hymnody, and was later largely outgrown.³⁹

The hymns of John Austin, 1613-69, a convert to Roman Catholicism, exerted a considerable influence in the period under review.⁴⁰ His Devotions in the Antient Way of Offices, Paris, 1668, is a striking group of 39 hymns, original except for two or three by Richard Crashaw. Four editions were published in its Catholic form. A Reformed version was issued for the use of the members of the Church of England by Theophilus Dorrington, in 1686, and another the following year, by the Lady Susanna Hopton under the editorship of George Hickes. Both these Reformed versions passed through several editions up to the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth century.

Through Dorrington's recension some of Austin's hymns were included in Samuel Bury's Collection of Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, and might have been sung in a few Dissenting congregations in the time of Watts. But Austin, carrying forward the tradition of the vernacular Office Hymn found in Wither, wrote in a medium alien to Dissent, and so his work like Herbert's, commended itself more to the Religious Societies and the private worship of the Nonjurors.⁴¹ In the preface to the 4th edition of Susanna Hopton's version of Austin, 1712, George Hickes says that the hymns were popular

"in/

"in the closets and Oratories of the more devout Sons of the Church of England....But of all others none have it in their power to practise this most delightful way of Worship in the Heaven-like Fellowship of Alternate Devotion to so much Advantage as Religious Societies. It is to such Votaries that I particularly recommend this Book of Devotions".

But there are strains in Austin's hymns which are heard again in Watts:

Come then, my Soul, bring all thy Pow'rs,
 And grieve thou hast no more:
 Bring every Day thy choicest Hours,
 And thy Great God adore.⁴²

In verse such as this, in which Austin's work abounds, we are approaching very much nearer to the true structure of the modern English hymn.

II

No survey of the seventeenth-century zone of hymn-writing would be complete without some reference to the activity of the Religious Societies.

These began as early as 1678⁴³ within the Anglican Communion,⁴⁴ and were in sympathy with the aims and ideals of the Society for Reformation of Manners, to which Watts alludes in his earliest preface. Towards the close of the century there were about forty of them in London, and they had spread to the cities and larger towns of England and Ireland, where they had the full support of the clergy.⁴⁵

A/

A document, compiled in 1698, gives the circumstances of their origin:

About 20 years ago several young men of the Church of England, in the city of London...were touched with...a sense of their sins and began to apply themselves...to religious thoughts and purposes...Thus several of them met together at the house (of their minister) and got acquainted. It was advised..that they should meet together once a week, and apply themselves to good discourse and edify oneanother, and Rules and Orders were prescribed for them...⁴⁶

The pamphlet proceeds to give the rules of one of these early societies, and it is illuminating to note in Rule 3 a reference to psalmody:

...the members of this Society shall meet together once every week in order to encourage oneanother in practical holiness...and praise (God's) name together.

Of these societies we select two to illustrate the part they played in the development of hymnody and hymn-singing before Watts. The first is associated with Samuel Wesley, 1662-1735, who was an ardent supporter of the movement as a whole. In a Letter concerning the Religious Societies, 1699, he grounds their legitimacy by reference to the life of the early Church, in which groups of Christians often met together "ad confoederandum disciplinam; and to pray and sing hymns to Christ as God".⁴⁷ Wesley formed a Religious Society at Epworth, of which its first members were his Choristers.⁴⁸ He presumably used in this society his own book of devotion, The Pious Communicant rightly prepared, etc., 1700. It includes prayers and psalms/

psalms suited to the several parts of the Lord's Supper. But it is the Psalm versions that chiefly concern us. Wesley gives a metrical paraphrase of the great Hallel, or paschal hymn, consisting of Psalms 113-118, which undergoes in his hands a mild process of evangelization. So, in some limited sense, Wesley approaches the later work of Isaac Watts on the Christianized Psalm.⁴⁹

The other Society is the one formed at Romney, Kent, in 1690. This had its own hymn-book by 1724, and probably long before then had supported the psalmodic reform of the two Playfords, and used the devotional lyrics of Herbert and the Office Hymns of Austin in its social worship.⁵⁰

There is every reason to believe that before Watts turned his hand to hymn-writing, societies such as these were living cells of psalm and hymn experimentation. We do know that the success of the Anglican religious societies induced Dissenting bodies to form similar ones in London, mostly after the death of Queen Anne. Probably Watts was the first to form such a Society of Protestant Dissenters, which, following the lead of the English Church, he trained in the conduct and spirit of worship. It was for this Society that he wrote A Guide to Prayer, 1715.⁵¹ Watts' work was thus linked, if tenuously, with the Society for Reformation of Manners, and with the older and more spiritual societies of seventeenth-century Anglicanism.

But/

But as far as hymnody is concerned, the real importance of the religious societies lies in their later impact upon Methodism. Their ideals were attractive to John Wesley, who was more hospitable to existing aids to worship, whatever their source, than Watts. Wesley and Whitefield found in these singing fellowships very useful points of contact, when they travelled the English countryside, propagating the Gospel through hymns and spiritual songs.

III.

The most powerful single Anglican influence upon Watts and the Dissenting School of Hymn-writers was John Mason, c.1630-94. He was a clergyman,⁵² whose warm and sincere piety won the esteem of Dissent. Baxter called him "the glory of the Church of England", and Watts recommended his works for distribution in families and among private Christians.⁵³ His influence came through Spiritual Songs; or Songs of Praise to Almighty God...1683, and was due to Thomas Shepherd, an Independent minister at Braintree, Mason's friend. It is believed that Shepherd, in 1693, added to Mason's Spiritual Songs "Penitential Cries begun by the author of the Songs of Praise, and carried on by another hand". The 'other hand' is probably Shepherd himself.

This enlarged edition, Julian says, p.717, passed through 20 editions, and there is evidence that the hymns in it were sung fairly early in Nonconformist churches.⁵⁴ Mason's name appears in the list of hymn-writers and compilers given by Samuel Bury in his early/

early eighteenth-century Collection of Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs. Mason's hymns are also included in a 1694 Collection of Divine Hymns, which several writers think is the first Independent Hymn-book.⁵⁵ Garrett Horder believes that the hymns of Mason and William Barton

"formed the thin end of the wedge by means of which, at last, hymn singing found its way into the services of the Independents...⁵⁶

Some students of hymnology, like George Macdonald,⁵⁷ have preferred Mason's hymns to those of Watts, and a few have acclaimed their author the true father of English hymnody.⁵⁸ Doubtless the Songs of Praise have been a rich mine from which hosts of hymn-writers, Watts and Charles Wesley included, have excavated many a glittering gem. Mason assuredly was one of the first hymnists to realise that hymns are written to be sung, and he is almost supreme in sounding the note of praise in verses marked by directness and sincerity. At the same time, his hymns are frequently marred by quaint expressions and conceits, which exclude them, except in parts, from congregational use.⁵⁹ James Montgomery was near the mark when he said that Mason's style was

"a middle tint between the raw colouring of Quarles and the daylight clearness of Watts".⁶⁰

The truth would seem to be that Mason's work looks back, not so much to Quarles, as to Herbert whom he keenly admired, and whose ideas he borrowed and some of the conceits in which they were expressed. But Mason's/

Mason's work also looks forward to the simpler and less ornamental species of hymn that was to be written by Isaac Watts. Thus there is an unresolved tension in his work which precludes its use, except in snatches or centos, in public worship. Horder says,

"Had Mason's lot been cast in a later and hymn singing age, he would probably have reached a more perfect hymnic style." ⁶¹

Watts thought highly of Mason's hymns in spite of his brother Enoch's diatribe against them. ⁶² Watts carried over into his own compositions their accent of seraphic praise, and freely borrowed from them. ⁶³ Wright goes so far as to say that

"if there had not been a Mason there would never have been a Watts" - ⁶⁴

a point of view which is out of historical focus.

John Mason recognised the importance of the subjective, or psychological factor, in congregational praise, before Watts. Although he acknowledged the supremacy of the praises of "Holy David", he adds (in the manner of Watts),

"But if we have not attained to so Divine a Frame,
yet we should at least praise God for our own
Mercies." ⁶⁵

Praise to be satisfying must come close to the present situation, experience and need of the worshippers - a position that Watts held tenaciously a quarter of a century later.

Bernard Manning ⁶⁶ has drawn our attention to Watts' genius for weaving his hymns and their individual stanzas into unities of thought/

thought and form. This he does by the repetition of words, phrases and ideas. The parallelism of Hebrew poetry without doubt suggested some of these devices. But there are faint foregleams of these methods in the verse of English devotional poets. In Mason particularly. Watts served his apprenticeship in this art under Mason, and, like many a craftsman, came to excel his master. Mason's patterns of hymn structure were considerably improved upon the anvil of Watts' more logical mind; but the earlier writer contributed something valuable to what we call, in this thesis, the architectonic quality of Isaac Watts' hymns.

Alongside of Mason stands Thomas Ken, 1637-1711,⁶⁷ the last of the Anglican hymnists of significance in our period. He too, has affiliations with Herbert and the devotional poets. And like Wither and Austin, his slender but lasting contribution to hymnody is in the genre of the Office Hymn. But he points forward more than any of these writers (more even than Mason) to the kind of metre and structure which the modern English hymn was to assume under Isaac Watts. His three hymns,⁶⁸ two of which, with modifications, have been since adopted by all branches of the Church, brought with them, as Gillman puts it,

"a pledge and assurance that a native hymnody had at length come to birth".⁶⁹

It is chiefly in the structure of the hymn that Ken's work is connected/

connected with that of Watts. It forms

"a....link between the psalmody of the English Reformation and the hymnody of modern times".⁷⁰

James Montgomery was the first hymnologist to remark upon the architectural quality of Ken's hymns, which foreshadows the work of Watts:

"The well-known doxology....is a masterpiece at once of amplification and compression:- amplification, in the burthen, 'Praise God', repeated in each line; compression, by exhibiting God as the object of praise in every view we can imagine praise due to Him; praise for all His blessings, yea, for 'all blessings', none coming from any other source; praise, by every creature, specifically invoked 'here below', and in heaven 'above'; praise, to Him in each of the characters wherein He has revealed Himself in his word - 'Father, Son, and Holy Ghost'. Yet this comprehensive verse is sufficiently simple, that, by it 'out of the mouths of babes and sucklings praise might be perfected'; and it appears so easy, that one is tempted to think hundreds of the sort might be made without trouble. The reader has only to try, and he will quickly be undeceived, though the longer he tries, the more difficult he will find the task to be".⁷¹

One might add that Ken accomplished all this within the limited compass of the metrical psalm stanza! It was left for Watts to continue, and in some cases to perfect, over a longer range of verses, this type of hymn structure, surfacely simple, yet holding together the two customary antithetic qualities of 'compression' and 'amplification'.⁷²

IV.

We have traced the history of the hymn movement of the seventeenth century to the point where it leaves the Anglican and enters the Nonconformist camp. The great personality who illustrates this transition/

transition is Richard Baxter, 1615-91. He is the first hymnologist of pervasive influence within Dissent. This side of his work has been generally overlooked, probably because of his greatness in other fields of thought and action.⁷³ Yet he constitutes the link between the poets and hymnists of the English Church above mentioned, and the modern hymn which was soon to spring from the loins of Dissent, and a little later to be dressed in strength and beauty by the Independent Isaac Watts.

A long and scholarly life fitted Baxter for this transitional rôle.

He lived alongside of Pope and Addison, as well as Shakespeare; of Isaac Watts, as well as Giles Fletcher and George Herbert; of Sir Robert Walpole, as well as Sir Walter Raleigh.⁷⁴

He was an admirer of Herbert's Temple, and some of his own verse in Poetical Fragments, 1683, is dedicated to him,⁷⁵ and a few poems are influenced by him.⁷⁶ In most of Baxter's verse there is that "delightful fervour of the simplest love to God", which characterises the devotional lyrics of George Herbert.⁷⁷ Baxter says in the preface to Poetical Fragments,

"Next the Scripture Poems, there is none so savoury to me as Mr. George Herbert's.....Herbert speaks to God like one that really believeth in God, and whose business in this World is most with God. Heart-work and Heaven-work make up his Books".

Elsewhere, he makes a like confession:

"I have looked over Hutton, Vives, Erasmus, Scaliger, Salmasius Casaubon, and many other critical grammarians...I much value the method and sobriety of Aquinas...But how loth should I be to/

to take such sauce for my food, and such recreations for my business! The jingling of too much and false philosophy among them often drowns the noise of Aaron's bells. I feel myself much better in Herbert's Temple!" ⁷⁸

He was also a friend of John Mason. Both writers have the same strain of seraphic praise, Mason chiefly in verse, Baxter in prose, though it is present too in his Poetical Fragments. ⁷⁹

Baxter is the link between the nucleus of hymns added to the Old Version and the work of the immediate predecessors of Watts. Amongst the 'Gospel Hymns' appended to his Paraphrase on the Psalms of David, published posthumously by Matthew Sylvester, in 1692, there are metrical versions of the Magnificat, Nunc Dimittis, Benedicite, Te Deum, etc.; and in the preface Baxter, in attempting to legitimatize his practice, says,

"those that published the Old Church-Psalms, added many useful Hymns, that are still printed with the Psalms in Metre". ⁸⁰

But his work is forward looking as well. Through William Barton, ⁸¹ he reanimated the old liturgical and Scripture paraphrases, and so exercised an influence on the early hymnody of Dissent which prepared the way for Watts.

Baxter's own experiments in psalmodic reform, Paraphrase on the Psalms of David and Monthly Preparations for Holy Communion... With Divine Hymns, were not published till after his death, the former in 1692, the latter in 1696. ⁸² His Poetical Fragments, which have since given to the Church a few hymns, was issued towards the close of his life/

life, and its contents were not intended to be used in public worship.

"All that I have to say for these Fragments, is, That being fitted to Women, and vulgar Wits, which are the far greater number, they may be useful to such, though contemptible to those of higher Elevation and Expectation".

At the same time, a few of these verses manage to unite qualities that are essential in a good hymn: simplicity, sincerity, fervour, and, what has been called, "logical strength".⁸³ A part of Baxter's affinity with Watts is the combination in his writings of sombre fervour with logical strength. Like Watts, he is a logician who still finds room for religious passion:

"I confess, when God awakeneth in me those Passions which I account rational and holy, I am so far from condemning them, that I think I was half a Fool before, and have small comfort in sleepy Reason".⁸⁴

Watts, in the interest of religion, believed in the legitimacy of an appeal to the passions and emotions of men:

"Some are more easily susceptible of Religion in a grave Discourse and sedate Reasoning. Some are best frightened from Sin and Ruin by Terror, Threatening and Amazement: Their Fear is the properest Passion to which we can address ourselves, and begin the Divine Work: Others can feel no Motive so powerful as that which applies itself to their.... Imagination. Now I thought it lawful to take hold of any Handle of the Soul....".⁸⁵

Again, like Watts, Baxter appeals to the bar of the worshipper's experience:

"Those that deny the lawful use of singing.....do disclose their unheavenly unexperienced hearts....Had they felt the heavenly delights that many of their Brethren in such duties have felt, I think they would have been of another mind".⁸⁶

Compare/

Compare that with this passage from Watts' preface to the Psalms of David Imitated, 1719, p.XXII.:

"...I would intreat them also to forget their younger Prejudices for a Season so far as to make a few Experiments of these Songs; and try whether they are not suited, thro' Divine Grace, to kindle in them a Fire of Zeal, and Love, and to exalt the willing Soul to an Evangelic Temper of Joy and Praise. And if they shall find, by sweet Experience, any devout Affections raised, and a holy Frame of Mind awakened within them by these Attempts of Christian Psalmistry, I persuade myself, that I shall receive their Thanks, and be assisted by their Prayers....Whatsoever Sentiments they had formerly entertain'd, yet surely they will not suffer their old and doubtful Opinions to prevail against their own inward Sensations of Piety and religious Joy".

This note of 'sweet experience' is sounded again in Watts'

Short Essay:⁸⁷

"The Faith, the Hope, the Love, and the heavenly pleasure that many Christians have profess'd while they have been singing evangelical Hymns, would probably be multiply'd and diffus'd amongst the Churches, if they would but breathe out their Devotion in the Songs of the Lamb...."

And again, in the same Essay he almost echoes Baxter's words:⁸⁸

"...let us have a Care lest we rob our Souls and the Churches of those Divine Comforts of evangelic Psalmody, by a Fondness of our old and preconceived Opinions."⁸⁹

The dual emphasis on the legitimacy of appealing to the worshipper's emotions and experience, not wanting in Puritan preaching, but splendidly crystallized in the writings of Baxter, was carried over by Isaac Watts into the sphere of psalmody, and constitutes, even in an Age of Reason, a link between the Evangelicalism of the seventeenth and/

and the literary and religious Romanticism of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Finally, compare the opening of Watts' historic preface to Hymns and Spiritual Songs, 1707, with the great passages on the supremacy of praise in Baxter's Saints' Everlasting Rest, and it will be clear that young Watts, who knew Baxter's books while a student, and who later said that he would rather be the author of A Call to the Unconverted....than of Paradise Lost, was influenced by the divine temper as well as by some of the liturgical ideals of Richard Baxter.⁹⁰

But Baxter's chief influence upon the hymnody of Nonconformity before Watts was as the leader of a movement for the improvement of psalmody, which was at first mainly confined to English Presbyterianism. It resulted in a new interest in the performance of worship-song,⁹¹ and in the emergence of a school of hymn-writers whose chief function was to provide Gospel hymns for the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.⁹² The inadequacy of metrical psalmody was felt more keenly at the Communion Service than in any other part of the Church's worship.

"Where can you find (Watts writes) a Psalm that speaks the Miracles of Wisdom and Power as they are discover'd in a crucify'd Christ".⁹³

Within Anglicanism there had been attempts to make up for this deficiency by adding a Sacramental hymn to the Old Version.⁹⁴ Towards the end of the seventeenth century, Samuel Wesley paraphrased a few psalms for pre-communion use.

The/

The Westminster Directory which, in a general way, represented the liturgical ideals of Dissent in the period 1644-61, made no provision for singing at the Lord's Supper.⁹⁵ The appearance of a growing body of Sacramental hymns in some Nonconformist Churches, between 1693 and 1709, was due to the influence of Richard Baxter. We know that the content of congregational praise was one of the issues raised by the Presbyterian divines before the Savoy Conference of 1661 called by Charles II "to advise upon and review the...Book of Common Prayer".⁹⁶ In Baxter's A Petition for Peace: with the Reformation of the Liturgy..., 1661, which was laid before the Conference and may be said to represent the point of view of the Presbyterians, there are two rubrics in connection with the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper:

Here are also adjoyned a Thanksgiving for Christ and his benefits, and a Hymn to be used at the discretion of the Minister either after Sermon, or at the Communion, or on other daies. (p.36)

Next sing some part of the Hymn in meeter or some fit Psalm of Praise. (p.58)

The Hymn referred to in the second rubric is A Thanksgiving after the receiving of the Lord's Supper, one of the six original hymns attached to Sternhold and Hopkins Psalter, 1560-2. Thus Baxter found his precedent in the sixteenth-century Lutheran element in the Old Version. His own contribution in this field of reform did not see print till after his death, but there can be no doubt that the work of Barton, Boyse, Matthew Henry, Burgess, and perhaps Stennett, /

Stennett, - all of whom wrote hymns for the Sacrament - was inspired by his leadership, and made ready the way for Watts' group of hymns "prepared for the Lord's Supper", 1707-9.⁹⁷

But in spite of his interest in hymnody, Baxter took a conservative attitude towards metrical psalmody. Far from wishing to evangelize the Psalms of David, as Watts did, he wanted a metrical version closer to the Hebrew original:

"I durst not venture on the Paraphrastical great liberty of others; I durst make Hymns of my own, or explain the Apocryphal; but I feared adding to God's Word, and making my own to pass for God's".⁹⁸

Baxter sought to renovate not the content but the form of metrical psalmody:

"Concerning the Psalms for Publick use, we desire that, instead of the imperfect version of the Psalms in Meeter now in use, Mr. William Barton's Version, and that perused and approved by the Church of Scotland (being the best that we have seen) may be received and corrected by some skilful man, and both allowed (for grateful variety) to be Printed together on several Columns (sic) or Pages, and publickly used; At least until a better than either of them shall be made".⁹⁹

Baxter's own experiment in a more variegated form of psalmody appeared posthumously in 1692. It is probably the oddest freak in all literary craftsmanship. By the addition or deletion of the necessary number of syllables printed within brackets in black letter, Common Metre Psalms may be sung to Long or Short Metre tunes, and vice versa. Watts speaks disparagingly of this artificial device/

device for seasoning psalmody with the spice of variety; and points out a more excellent way, by translating individual psalms in several metres.¹⁰⁰

Though Baxter would not evangelise the Psalms he freely Christianized the Benedicite, adding the title Christian Philosophy.¹⁰¹ Did this Christianized version of an Old Testament song give a clue to young Watts in his similar treatment of the Psalms?

Verse 24 of Baxter's paraphrase of Benedicite reads,

O ye his chosen flock
 Brought near him by his love,
 His Church built on the Rock,
 Redeem'd for Joys above
 Your God adore,
 Your voices raise, And sing his praise
 For evermore.

The theme of redemption through Christ is imported again into verse 27:

Ye spirits of the just,
 Advanc'd by saving grace,
 Who here in Christ did trust,
 And now behold his face,
 In heav'n above
 You joyfully There magnifie
 The God of Love.

Here we have, in all probability, a mid-seventeenth century example of the method which Watts was to adopt in paraphrasing practically the whole of the Hebrew Psalter. This isolated instance of the Christianizing of an Old Testament song would be an enigma did we not know, that among the proposals put forward by the Presbyterian Divines at the Savoy Conference, was one "to appoint some..Scripture hymn/

hymn instead of the apocryphal Benedicite".¹⁰² Baxter felt at liberty to "explain the Apocryphal (Hymns)" but he "durst not venture" to take the same freedom with the Psalms. Watts' more logical mind perceived that if that method might be used legitimately with one part of the Bible there was no reason why it should not be applied to the whole. Baxter, for all his width of vision, had a blind spot!

Baxter supported the use of hymns only as a supplement to metrical psalms, and thus foreshadowed the later practice of English and Scottish Presbyterianism. Watts and his school, using the Christianized psalm, which by a process of natural evolution led to the evangelical hymn, adumbrated the later adoption by the Congregational churches of a hymn-book as the chief, if not the sole staple, of communal praise. This departure from the traditional psalmody has been only a mixed blessing; as some phases of Non-conformist hymnody after Watts clearly show.

At the same time, Baxter's plea for a supplemental hymnody prepared Metropolitan Presbyterianism to respond kindly to the hymn side of Watts' reform. It is a fact that, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Hymns and Spiritual Songs found more favour with London Presbyterian ministers than with their Independent brethren.¹⁰³ And the reason is not far to seek: Baxter and his school had broken up the stubborn ground and watered it against the day of Watts' potent sowing.

Finally,/

Finally, what Dearmer calls "the magnificent...aggression of Isaac Watts"¹⁰⁴ is foreshadowed in Baxter. In the preface to his Psalms he says that he has added Gospel Hymns

"to confute them that think that no forms of Worship but those found in Scripture may be used, or imposed....It is past doubt, that Hymns more suitable to Gospel times, may and ought to be now used".¹⁰⁵

Again, Baxter is the herald of the emancipation from the literalism of metricized Scripture in worship-song, which was the chief feature in Watts' programme of reform. How like Watts he is when he writes:

"I confess my Metre, and Tunes, and Apocryphal Hymns are not in words found in the Scriptures, nor are the words of my ordinary preaching and Prayers there. But they are commanded by the general Precepts of the Scripture".¹⁰⁶

It has been said that Baxter's liberal attitude to hymnody founded a school of Presbyterian hymn-writers and hymnologists. Of these William Barton, c.1603-78,¹⁰⁷ is the most important. Like his master, Barton pursued two projects for the improvement of church praise. In 1644, he published The Book of Psalms in Metre, in line with the Puritan demand for a closer version of the Psalter. The 3rd edition (1646) was recommended by the House of Lords to the Westminster Assembly in preference to the version of the Psalms of Francis Rous (2nd ed. 1643) that enjoyed the support of the Commons.¹⁰⁸ In the preface to his Psalms Barton takes the conservative attitude to metrical psalms, stressing their appropriateness to present-day liturgical requirements. In 1659, Barton has changed his mind on this issue /

issue. In that year, he published A Century of Select Hymns, which he increased in 1670 to Two Centuries. After his death Barton's hymns were published by his son as Six Centuries of Select Hymns and Spiritual Songs out of the Holy Bible, 1688. From the Epistle to the Reader (edition 1670), we learn that Barton began to write hymns at Baxter's request, and that his first composition was a translation of Te Deum in English metre. In the preface of the same book Barton comes out boldly on the side of hymns, quoting the precedent of the Primitive Church and the Bohemian Brethren. However, the kind of hymn he favours marks a divergence from the Baxterian type, and a movement towards the species of hymn written later by Watts. Barton condemns hymns like The Complaint of a Sinner and The Humble Sute, included in the hymnic nucleus of the Old Version, as nonsensical or erroneous.¹⁰⁹ He has no place for a hymnody that forsakes a Scripture basis. But, when he comes to apply this Scriptural principle to his own hymn-writing, we notice that he allows himself greater freedom than the principle would seem to permit.

In a letter prefixed to Four Centuries of Select Hymns..., 1668, Barton's method of paraphrasing is exemplified by the quotation of a stanza of George Herbert's poem The Holy Scriptures II:

This verse marks that, and both do make a motion
Unto a third, that ten leaves off doth lie:
Then as dispersed herbs do watch a potion,¹¹⁰
These three make up some Christian's destinie.

He freely takes widely separated passages from one Testament or both, turns/

turns them into verse, and weaves them into the unity of a mosaic hymn. Thus in Barton's work we see the birth - if abortive - of a new kind of Scripture paraphrase to be perfected later by Isaac Watts in the first book of his Hymns and Spiritual Songs. As Dr. Julian puts it,

"....in the free grouping of New Testament texts, which characterised (Barton's) paraphrases, we see how unconsciously the type of hymn, which we shall find below in Watts emerged. The habit of Sermon and Commentary made it an almost irresistible impulse to interweave the familiar parallel passages, to make one passage a theme for expansion by others, to omit and combine for the sake of unity; all the while, as (he) believed, keeping within the letter of Scripture. Then came the licence of some connecting verse, as a piece of machinery. And only one step more converted the Scriptural Paraphrase into the Scriptural Hymn." 111

Watts took that decisive step and determined the character of modern English hymnody. He began his work in his 21st year with a paraphrase of part of Revelation V in the manner of Barton, but even in this composition and the other so-called paraphrases which make up book one of Hymns and Spiritual Songs, we discern a new freedom which is more than paraphrastic liberty.

Barton has this further link with Watts: a perusal of the Table of Contents of his Centuries shows that he is seeking to provide a Hymn-book for Dissent.

Matthew Henry, 1662-1714, adopted Barton's method of hymn writing. In 1695, he published a volume of Family Hymns,¹¹² primarily written to encourage psalmody in the homes of the people, but introduced as well into his own Services. The hymns are taken mainly/

mainly from the Scriptures. But verses from several psalms are gathered together to make a hymn, after the manner of Barton. In the Preface the precedent of sermon exegesis is put forward in support of this method of hymn construction.

We have seen that Richard Baxter awakened an interest in Sacramental hymnody.^{112B} In Barton's Centuries there are several hymns for the Lord's Supper scattered through their pages. The first of the Presbyterian ministers to compose a group of hymns for the Sacrament was Joseph Boyse, 1660-1728.¹¹³ He was at the time a member of the Dublin Presbytery. Louis F. Benson, the American hymnologist, seems to be the only writer who finds in southern Ireland in this period a hymn movement exercising an influence beyond Presbyterianism in which it originated.¹¹⁴ Boyse published in 1693 a volume of Sacramental Hymns.¹¹⁵ In the preface he mentions the psychological motive that constrained him to move away from the sole use of the Psalter at the Lord's Table:

"....I was chiefly led to compose these Sacramental Hymns, most of 'em out of the New Testament, for this obvious (and I hope satisfactory) reason, viz., Because such portions of it as I have selected, do far more directly and clearly describe the great mystery of our Redemption by our Incarnate and dying Saviour, the inestimable benefits we receive or expect as the fruits of his precious sacrifice, and the obligations that thence lye upon us to devote our selves to the service of God by him, than we can find in the Psalms of David.....Nor can we reasonably expect to find any thing so pertinent and full to this purpose in the writings of any of the Prophets before our Saviour's Incarnation".

That recalls Watts' saying which we quoted earlier on:

"Where can we find a Psalm that speaks the Miracles of Wisdom and Power as they are discover'd in a crucify'd Christ". (Short Essay on Psalmody, 1707).

The/

The individual hymns in Boyse's volume cannot be said to have any merit. But the fact that they were published fourteen years before Isaac Watts issued his own hymns in this field, gives them an historical importance. The book is prefixed by a recommendation of six Dublin ministers, which is a significant testimony to local sentiment and usage.¹¹⁶ Watts, who hardly mentions by name his forerunners in hymnody, has a word to say about Boyse.¹¹⁷ And there are phrases in Watts' Prefaces which echo words and ideas of Boyse's preface to Sacramental Hymns. Note, for example, these parallel passages:

None can imagine it was my design in this Essay to set up for a Poet. For as I never had a Genius that way, so I am so far from thinking it necessary in Composing such Divine Hymns for Publique use, that those sallies of Wit in 'em that would be Entertaining to the refined Judges of Poetry, wou'd render 'em wholly unserviceable to the common People, whose affection to this part of publick worship deserves all the assistance we can give to farther it. (Boyse).

.....Poesy is not the Business of my Life...the Songs Sacred to Devotion were never written with a design to appear before the Judges of Wit, but only to assist the.....Worship of Vulgar Christians.¹¹⁸

(Watts: Preface to Horae Lyricae, 1705, p.VIII)

(Scriptural Songs) shine the brightest in their own native simplicity, without any borrowed colours.....
(Boyse)

.....the Christian Mysteries have no need of these Tinsel Trappings; the Glories of our Religion in a plain Narration and a simple Dress have something brighter and bolder in them.....

(Watts: Horae, p.IV)

.....if these Hymns may contribute any thing to enflame more/

more of divine Love and Joy in the hearts of plain
and sincere Christians, I have attained my end....
(Boyse).

.....If (these Hymns) may but attain the honour of
being esteem'd Pious Meditations to assist the devout
and retir'd Soul in the Exercises of Love, Faith and Joy
'twill be a valuable Compensation of my Labours.

(Watts: Preface to Hymns, 1707, p.XIII).

But the main influence of Boyse's on Watts' hymnody is seen in the
grouping together of hymns for the Sacrament in a book to themselves -
the appearance of a kind of Sacramental Hymnary. This was a new
venture in the hymnody of Dissent. Speaking of it, in the preface
to the 1693 edition, Boyse says:

"If any think these Hymns needless after those that
Mr. Barton has publish'd I shall only say, That as his
Hymns that are proper for the Sacrament are confusedly
Intermixt with others, so the book was too large for a
whole Congregation to be furnish'd with, when they joyn
in this Exercise at the Lord's Table".

Boyse's example exerted an influence both on Stennett and Watts.¹¹⁹

Slender and immature as Boyse's contribution is, it takes a
leading position in a line of Dissenting hymnists - chiefly
ministers with inside knowledge of the requirements and limitations
of worship in specific congregations, - which prepared the way for the
useful and usable Hymn-book which Watts issued in 1707 (see chapt. 7
below).

Four years after the publication of Boyse's Sacramental Hymns,
a similar collection came from the pen of Joseph Stennett, 1662-1713.¹²⁰
Though a Baptist minister, Stennett is perhaps more in line with the
hymnological/

hymnological work of Boyse than with that of Benjamin Keach, with which he is commonly associated. Unlike Boyse, Stennett possessed a poetic gift. Whitley tells us that his metrical version of Solomon's Song (1700) led to his being invited, with the approval of the Archbishop of York, to revise the metrical Psalter of the Church of England.¹²¹ His Sacramental Hymns were entitled Hymns in Commemoration of the Sufferings of our Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ Compos'd for the Celebration of his Holy Supper, London, 1697. The second and enlarged edition, 1705, which we have used, has An Advertisement to the Reader (6 pages), a Preface by Another Hand, (16 pages) which defends the use of Gospel hymns, and a Hymn by the same anonymous person "upon his being convinced that singing is a part of Divine Worship". There is a Dedication in verse (10 pages) by Stennett himself, and 50 Hymns. Appended to the text of the hymns is a list of "the more difficult Words explain'd", after the manner of Patrick in his Version of the Psalms. The third edition, London, 1709, is of added interest, as its use is recommended by fifteen ministers, the preponderance of whom are London Presbyterians. Among them are the names of all the lecturers at Little Eastcheap¹²² who were ardent reformers of the psalmody of Dissent, and some of whom sponsored the work of Watts. Stennett's thus afford a link with Watts' work. We gather from the Advertisement to the Reader that his hymns were originally "lined-out" in his own Meeting-house, and/

and, because of their success, he had been persuaded "that they would be acceptable and useful to many other Congregations".

Joseph Stennett is a minor religious poet of some distinction, and his work was one of Watts' models, when he was fashioning his own conception of the English hymn. There are lines in Stennett's Dedication which recall the style and content of Watts' hymns:

May all harmonious Souls their Numbers join,
And each a pious offering add to mine;
Make Earth below resemble Heav'n above,
Sing Holy Songs, and sing of Holy Love.

(lines 160-4)

Had I ten thousand Hearts, those Hearts should be
A voluntary Sacrifice to Thee.

(lines 130-1)

Compare that with these lines from Watts' "Mutual Love stronger than Death", Horae Lyricae, 1709,

Had I ten thousand Lives my own,
At his Demand
With cheerful Hand,
I'd pay the Vital Treasure down
In hourly Tributes at his Feet.

(lines 11-15)

and with this verse from one of Watts' greatest hymns:

Were the whole Realm of Nature mine,
That were a Present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my Soul, my Life, my All.

(Hymns and Spiritual Songs,
Book 3, H.7, verse 5)

Stennett's/

Stennett's hymns themselves are unequal in merit and usable only in parts.¹²³ But in theological content, devotional ardour, phraseology and structure they often remind us of Watts.¹²⁴ Watts might have written this,

His only Son on whom he plac'd
All his Delight and Love,
Before he form'd the Earth below,
Or spread the Heavens above.

(Hymn V, verse 2)

or this,

Amazing Love! 'Tis Infinite!
No Thoughts its endless Depth can sound;
It Heaven's high Arch exceeds for height,
And for Extent, the World's vast Round.

(Hymn VI. verse 7)

or this couplet,

Our highest Flights are all too low
to reach thy Loftier Name.

(Hymn XVIII, verse 1)

or this one,

Whose Myst'ries the inquiring Crowd
Of Cherubs look into.

(Hymn XVIII, verse 6)

and most certainly these,

Extend the Triumphs of thy Cross
Where'er the Sun has shone.

(Hymn XLVII, verse 5)

(compare with Watts' Psalm LXXII, 2nd Pt. verse 1)

Assume/

Assume thy Right, enlarge thy Reign
As far as Earth extends her Coasts

(Hymn L, verse 2)

(compare with Watts' Psalm LXXII, 2nd Pt. verse 1),

and this line with its expression of an idea that occurs often in
Watts' verse,¹²⁵

Why stay thy Chariot Wheels so long?

(Hymn L, verse 2)

In Stennett's hymns are found some of the conceits that appear
in Watts' early work and reflect the influence of Herbert and Crashaw:

See how each Wound the blushing Ground
With precious Tincture stains.

(Hymn VII, verse 4)

Those Wounds are Mouths that preach his Grace.

(Hymn XII, verse 6)

Lastly, Stennett approximates sometimes to the structure of Watts'
hymn stanza, as in the following:

My Blessed Saviour, is thy Love,
So great, so full, so free?
Behold I give my Love, my Heart,
My Life, my all, to Thee.

(Hymn XXII, verse 1)

Angels and Men, your Songs renew,
Sing all with pious Mirth;
Rejoice and shout, ye Heavens above,
And be thou glad, O Earth.

(Hymn XXIV, verse 1)

Eternal Praise to thy Great Name,
By all the Host of Heaven,
By every Nation, every Tongue,
And every Heart be given.

(Hymn XXXV, verse 9)

His/

His Life the Model be of mine;
 His Word the Rule to guide my Ways;
 His Cross the Death of all my Crimes;
 His Love the Subject of my Praise.

(Hymn XXXIX, verse 9)

Daniel Burgess, 1645-1713,¹²⁶ is a hymnodist of historical importance in the period immediately before Watts. His significance has been overlooked. Though his individual hymns have little merit, his work as a whole shows some features that appear in the work of Watts. Burgess belongs to the Presbyterian group of hymnologists associated with Dublin. He was ordained by the Presbytery of that city.¹²⁷

It is difficult to say whether his hymns were written before or after the appearance of Watts' 1707 volume; for the collection bearing Burgess's name was published by John Billingsley in 1714, as Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs. By the late Reverend Mr. Daniel Burgess, Minister of the Gospel. From the Prefatory Epistle (pp.iii-viii), we learn that the hymns had been used in Burgess's Meeting-house "through the course of many years", and, "great Importunities (had) been used, both while he was living, and since his Death, that they might see the Light". They might therefore, have been used in worship before Watts published his Hymns and Spiritual Songs. But even if they were adopted in public worship after Watts' book appeared, they still have historical significance, as they afford an interesting example of a sporadic attempt to christianize a considerable number of psalms. Watts had invited some-

one/

one to do this in the preface to his Hymns and Spiritual Songs, 1707.¹²⁸

Burgess' book is divided into two parts: Psalm versions, and Hymns. The two sections of the volume are separated by a new title page, "Hymns and Spiritual Songs for the use of Plain Christians" (p.207).

The Hymns are divided into two groups: (1) 35 paraphrases, plus metrical versions of the Decalogue, Lord's Prayer and Te Deum. For the most part the paraphrases are close and each is supplied with a text or texts. But No.24 has no text and is a real hymn. (2) 57 "Occasional Hymns", among which are several designed for the Lord's Supper.

While these hymns have no intrinsic value, being mainly imitations of work already done by Baxter, Barton and Boyse, the Psalms, with which the book begins, reveal an attempt to paraphrase close on 60 Psalms¹²⁹ in the language of Church and Gospel, if often clumsily and inartistically:

My Portion is my God in Christ,
From him all I have flows;
And his ne'er failing Power secures
All that his Grace bestows. (Ps. XVI, verse 1)

The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
My gracious Shepherd is:
My Wants will always be supplied
By tender Care of his. (Ps. XXIII, verse 1)

Sure there thy wond'rous rich free Grace
Will reach thro' my few Days;
And let my Life be long or short,
It shall be spent in Praise. (Ibid, verse 6)¹³⁰

O Thou Creator of the World,
 Thy never-failing Grace
 From Age to Age hath lent thy Church
 A constant dwelling Place. (Ps. 90, verse 1)

Because that God in Christ doth reign.... (Ps. 99, verse 1)

Christ loveth judgment, and confirms
 Eternal equity;
 And in his Church he doth his Words
 All of them verify. (Ps. 99, verse 4)

To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
 Let us our Thanks repeat;
 For why, his Mercy hath no end,
 But is for ever great. (Ps. 136, verse 1)

We have noticed Barton's divergence from the hymnological ideals of Baxter.¹³¹ Burgess epitomises a divergence from Baxter's Psalmodic ideals, and his work shows, even within English Presbyterianism, a departure from the conservative evaluation of the metrical Psalms in Christian worship. And this before the appearance of Watts' epoch-making volume, The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament, 1719.

Some years before Watts printed his Hymns, the Presbyterian Hymn Movement produced the first careful exploration of the sources of hymnody at the disposal of Dissent, at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Samuel Bury, a Presbyterian leader in Suffolk, published A Collection of Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs, (3rd edition, 1713¹³²), to which he prefixed a long list of authors and hymn-collections of which he had made use. Benson thinks that this book could not have been without influence on Watts, though it was probably never used in/

in Church worship. Bury states that the available sources for a hymn-book before Watts wrote his Hymns and Spiritual Songs were:

Barton's Centuries
 Barton's Hymns
 Baxter
 Boyse's Sacramental Hymns
 Crawshaw's Sacred Poems
 Clarke's Annotations
 Dorrington's Hymns
 Divine Hymns
 Daniel Burgess
 Foxton's Hymns
 Guide to Glory
 Herbert (Common Metre Version)
 Milbourn's Version of the Psalms
 Patrick
 Penitential Cries
 Scotch Psalms
 Mason's Songs of Praise
 Tate and Brady
 Vincent's Sacramental Hymns
 Woodford's Paraphrase

The writers of Psalm Versions in the above list will be mentioned in later chapters.¹³³

Bury's book, and later the Independent Simon Browne's Preface to his Hymns and Spiritual Songs (1720),¹³⁴ were early attempts, within Dissent, to survey the entire hymnological field; and they reveal immediately before Watts' reform a growing interest in the history and science of the English Hymn.

V.

Alongside of the Presbyterian Hymn Movement, but having little connection with it, except perhaps in the work of Stennett, there was a tendency towards hymn-writing and hymn-singing in some Baptist churches. It is outside our province to sketch the history of the/

the controversy that raged in Baptist circles about the legitimacy of singing conjointly even the metrical Psalms in worship.¹³⁵ Julian tells us, p.610, that the first to introduce conjoint singing into Baptist congregations was Benjamin Keach, 1640-1704. He managed in his own church at Horsleydown, Southwark, to extend worship-song to hymns. This he did, Whitley tells us, in three stages over several years; firstly, after the Lord's Supper, then on Thanksgiving Days, and lastly, at the close of Sunday worship.¹³⁶ Keach determined "a fashion of hymn singing"; he was writing hymns as early as 1676,¹³⁷ but the book that concerns us, because of its bearing on Watts' work, is Spiritual Melody, 1691. This is a collection of 222 hymns, divided into 9 parts, of which he writes in the Preface,

"several....have upon diverse occasions been sung in some particular Congregations".

The individual hymns are disappointing. The verse is often doggerel, and if not that, is spoiled frequently by bad rhymes or no rhymes at all. There are some grammatical errors. In Part 1, which promises us hymns "setting forth the Glory of God", we look in vain for the incomparable bursts of praise for which Isaac Watts is noted. Keach's hymns in this section are "similitudes" (after the quaint manner of Quarles) in which God is compared to a "dwelling-place", a "refuge", a "man of war", and even a moth (Hymn II). But, despite their amateurishness, these compositions have some historical importance, as early examples of the homiletical hymn, a genre in which Watts and especially/

especially Doddridge was later to excel.

A few of Keach's hymns are very nearly evangelical psalms in Watts' manner. Notice, for example, his Christianised parody of Psalm 100,

Now let all People on the Earth
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice,
whose love was such to bring Thee forth,
But chiefly let thy Saints rejoyce,

which ends with,

For why the Lord our God is good,
His Covenant it standeth sure,
'Tis ratify'd by Christ's own Blood,
And shall from age to age endure.

But the main importance of Keach's work in relation to Isaac Watts must be looked for in two directions. He was the first dissenter to publish a hymn-book which was no longer mainly a literary effort, but compiled to meet the liturgical needs of a definite congregation. In this sense, despite its faults, the work of Keach approaches more closely than any writer we have mentioned, the subsequent work of Watts. Secondly, Keach has affinity with Watts in his conception of the purpose of a hymn-book as a sung-liturgy. He shows us Watts' doctrinal hymn in embryo. The Baptist hymn-writer more than any of Watts' predecessors grasped the truth, if roughly, that a hymn-book is not only a book of praises, or a vade-mecum of the devotional life, but also a medium for the conveyance of moral and religious teaching.

VI.

This/

VI

This sketch of hymn writing and hymn singing preparatory to the work of Watts seems to show that the hymn, which was at first merely a private interest, became towards the end of the century almost a social necessity. The social purpose of hymns was not clearly seen, and did not become operative, till Baxter and his disciples introduced them into some of the meeting-houses of seventeenth-century Dissent. The Hymn as a rudimentary sung-liturgy among Nonconformists, whilst not out of line altogether with the verse of the religious poets, transcended its privacy, and became a social phenomenon. It grew out of a complex of ideas which were peculiar to the Dissenting ethos, and was fashioned into shape by leading personalities who were 'enthusiasts'.

At the beginning of the century, and for the next sixty years or so, both Episcopalian and Nonconformist adhered fairly strictly to the Calvinist theology. But when the conflict between them about Church Government began after the Savoy Conference, and Arminian tenets were largely adopted by the Anglican body, the Nonconformists emphasised their adherence to the five leading principles of Calvinist doctrine, and the persecution which they had to face after the Restoration, made them enthusiastic defenders of Calvin's teaching which they believed necessary for salvation. The hymn became an instrument of propaganda. "Hymns", Whitley says, "seem to be more congenial to the persecuted and unpopular who can express their/

their feelings in original song".

The propagandist motive behind the early hymnody of Dissent can hardly be sufficiently stressed. It was present in the Puritan books for children (Chapt. 8, below). It is represented in the work of Keach. Watts' more mature work is also propagandist, but his theology was too catholic to be cabined by partisan interests:

"I have avoided the more obscure and controvered Points of Christianity, that we might all obey the Direction of the Word of God and sing his Praises with Understanding....The Contentions and distinguishing Words of Sects and Parties are secluded, that whole Assembles might assist at the Harmony and different Churches join in the same Worship without Offence".¹³⁹

However, this does not imply that Watts was not a good Calvinist, if sometimes a mild one, and that he did not retain his Puritan hatred of anything in worship savouring of Roman superstition. But some of Watts' hymns were written in Dissent's comparatively halcyon days when the worst of its "winter (was) past...and the time of the singing of birds (had) come". The change in the fortune of Dissent is caught in the note of joy and deliverance in Watts' worship-song. If Luther's hymnody arose from the joyous consciousness of personal salvation, Watts' issued out of gratitude for the deliverance of the "Saints", after their long winter in persecution. It is the new song of the redeemed community.

Notes

Chapter 3

- 1 Cf. Chapter 2, above
- 2 Cf. Chapter 2, above and note 11.
- 3 Cf. Julian, John, A Dictionary of Hymnology, 1892, p.345.
- 4 Cf. England's Antiphon, 1874, p.272.
- 5 Cf. Farr, Edward, Select Poetry Chiefly Devotional of The Reign of Queen Elizabeth....., Cambridge, 1845, 2 vols.
- 6 Ibid. Vol. 1, P.XV, p.36.
- 7 Ibid. Vol. 2, p.463. Cf. also vol. 2, p.384 (Timothy Kendall) vol. 2, p.503 (D. Cox, contributor of Lord's Prayer to the O.V. 1560) vol. 2, p.546 (Abraham Fleming).
- 8 Cf. Julian, op. cit., p.924.
Farr, op. cit., vol. 1, p.XIX, pp.143-60.
Glass, H.A., The Story of the Psalters, 1888, pp.24-5.
- 9 Glass, op. cit., p.25.
- 10 Farr, op. cit., vol. 1, p.157.
- 11 Cf. Chapter 6, below.
- 12 Julian, op. cit., p.310, has a short biographical note on Drayton. The full title of his book is The Harmonie of the Church, containing, The Spiritual Songes and Holy Hymns of godly men, patriarks and prophetes: all sweetly sounding to the praise and glory of the Highest. Now (newlie) reduced into sundrie kinds/

kinds of English meter, meet to be read or sung, for the solace and comfort of the godly by M.D. London, 1591.

We have used the Percy Society Reprint of Drayton's Harmony, edited by Alexander Dyce, London, 1843.

- 13 "I speak not of Mars the god of wars, nor of Venus the goddess of love, but of the Lord of Hostes that made heaven and earth; not of toyes in mount Ida, but of triumphes in Mount Sion; not of vanities but of varities; not of tales, but of truthes...."
Preface to Harmonie, Percy Soc. Reprint.
- 14 George Saintsbury, A History of Elizabethan Literature, 1890, p.140, says that the reason for the censorship of Drayton's book must 'remain' not merely undiscovered but unguessed". But it can be easily guessed if not discovered: Drayton's interest in versifying the hymns and prayers of the Apocrypha might conceivably have been construed as a papist trait, and as a tendency subversive to the reformed worship.
Wither compiled a similar collection of Scripture Songs, cf. Julian, op. cit., p.1290, col. 1 (bottom of page).
- 15 Farr, op. cit., vol. 1, p.126, A Song of the Faithful for the Mercies of God.
- 16 Wither was the author of Hymns and Songs of the Church, 1623, and Hallelujah or Britain's Second Remembrancer, 1641.
- 17 Sampson, George, Century of Divine Songs, Warton Lecture, 1943, p.2.
- 18 The Hymnes and Songs of the Church, Divided into two Parts. The first Part comprehends the Canonickall Hymnes, and such parcels of Holy Scripture as may properly be Sung: with some other ancient Songs and Creeds. The second Part consists of the Spirituall Songs, appropriated to the severall Times and occasions, observable in the Church of England.
Translated and Composed by G.W. London: 1623.
- 19 Haleluiah or Britan's Second Remembrancer..., 1641.
- 20 Our citations from this are taken from the Introduction to Edward/

Edward Farr's facsimile reprint of Hymns and Songs of the Church, 1895 edition.

The Scholar's Purgatory was addressed to Archbishop Abbott and other bishops of Convocation, in vindication of the patent that the king had granted to Wither, and which had raised the active opposition of the Company of Stationers.

- 21 Cf. Farr, Hymns and Songs of the Church, op. cit., Intro. p.XVIII. also Farr, Hallelujah, or Britain's Second Remembrancer, 1857, pp. XXIX-XXX.
- 22 Cf. Chapt. 2, above.
- 23 Cf. Farr, Hallelujah, p.XVIII.
- 24 Cf. Farr, Select Poetry..., op. cit., vol. 1, p.XLIX. Julian, op. cit., p. 862.
- 25 Farr, Hymns and Songs of Church, op. cit., p.XXIV.
- 26 Cf. Chapt. 6, below.
- 27 Farr, Hymns and Songs, op. cit., pp.XXV-VI.
- 28 Ibid, pp.XXXVIII-IX.
- 29 Farr, Hallelujah, p.XXXI.
- 30 There are versified meditations for a Prince, a Subject, Member of Parliament, a Husband, Wife, Musician, Scholars and Pupils, and even for Jailors and Prisoners. In addition to vernacular Office Hymns, there are hymns for Seedtime and Harvest, Marriage, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper.
- 31 Cf. Horae Lyricae, 1705, p.10, An Hymn of Praise for Three Great Salvations, etc.
- 32 Cf. Chapt. 8, below.

- 33 Farr, Hymns and Songs of the Church, pp.XXIV-V.
- 34 Preface to Hymns and Spiritual Songs, 1707, p.VIII, also pp.IX, X.
- 35 Cf. Frere W.H., Historical Edition of Hymns A. and M., 1909, pp.13-25.
- 36 The Temple: Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations, by Mr. George Herbert. Cambridge, 1633.
- 37 Coleridge's Essays and Lectures on Shakespeare, and some other old Poets and Dramatists. London, 1924, p.372.
- 38 Select Hymns taken out^{of} Mr. Herbert's Temple....., London, 1697.
- 39 Cf. Courthope, W.J., A History of English Poetry, 1905, vol.5 p.333ff.
 Watts' great Communion Hymn, Crucifixion to the World by the Cross of Christ (Bk. 3, H.7) in its original form displays the influence of the Metaphysicals in verse 4:
 His dying Crimson like a Robe
 Spreads o'er his Body on the Tree,
 Then am I dead to all the Globe,
 And all the Globe is dead to me.
 Cf. also Hymns and Spiritual Songs, Bk 1, H.20, lines 19-20; h.69, lines 7-8; h.75, lines 5-6, 27-28, 31-32; h.77, lines 7-8; Book 2, H.3, lines 11-12; h.19, lines 9-12, 17-20, 23-24; h.13, lines 7-8; h.61, lines 17-20; h.81, lines 17-20; h.85, lines 13-20; h.108, lines 9-10; Book 3, H.22, lines 15-16. All these hymns, it is instructive to notice, appeared in the first edition. Metaphysical images and conceits are rarer in the hymns added to the second edition of 1709; though they are not wanting even in The Psalms of David Imitated, 1719, Cf. Psalm 65, second part, lines 13-14; Ps.73, first pt. lines 25-26; Ps.104, lines 33-34. Cf. Also Horae Lyricae, 1705, Book 2, p.169 To Mrs. Bendish Against Tears, 1699, lines 3-4, 9-10, reflect the influence of Crashaw's The Weeper.
- 40 Cf. The Dictionary of National Biography.
 Julian, op. cit., p.97.
 Abbey/

Abbey, C.J. and Overton, J.H., The English Church in the Eighteenth Century, 1878. vol. 1, Chapt.3, p.234.

Selborne, Hymns Their History and Development..., 1892, p.166.

- 41 The extreme High-Churchmen were for the most part Tories, who, being unable to take the Oath of Allegiance to William, were cut off from participation in the active work of society. Some of them turned their thoughts to the contemplative in religion, and the study of mystical divinity.
- 42 Devotions In the Ancient Way of Offices....(George Hickes), 4th ed., 1712. Hymn 1, st. 5, p.4
- 43 Overton, J.H., The Church in England, 1897, vol.2, pp.155-6. also Trevelyan, O.M., The England of Queen Anne, 1932, Chapt.3, for the discussion of spiritual movements within Anglicanism in 17th and early 18th centuries.
- 44 Portus, G.V., Caritas Anglicana: An inquiry into Religious Societies, London, 1912.
- 45 An account of the Societies for Reformation of Manners in England and Ireland....3rd ed., London 1700, p.20.
- 46 A Brief Account of the Nature, Rise, and Progress of the Societies for Reformation of Manners, etc....., Edinburgh, 1700, p.17.
- 47 Clarke, Adam, Memoirs of the Wesley Family, 2 vols. 1836.
- 48 It is interesting to notice that about the same time Samuel Wesley set up a Charity School "to go a great way towards securing the two generations". The Charity School Movement also played a considerable part in popularising hymn-singing, but the movement is hardly influential till after the production of Watts' significant work in hymnody, though it may have had some slight bearing on his Divine Songs, cf. Chapt. 8, below.
- 49 Cf. Chapt. 6, below.

50

John Playford, 1623-86 ?, attempted to introduce Austin's hymns into parochial worship through his Psalms and Hymns in solemn musick, etc., 1671, which included, along with a few anonymous hymns, 14 from Austin's Devotions. His son Henry Playford carried forward his father's work, and in 1701 published The Divine Companion, or, David's Harp new tun'd, designed as a supplement to the Old Version. It contained 12 hymns, among which Austin's predominate.

There is no evidence that either Playford achieved his purpose, but their work was welcomed by the Religious Societies and stamped itself upon the only hymn-book of such a Society that we have been able to trace, The Christian Sacrifice of Praises, Consisting of Select Psalms and Hymns with Doxologies and Proper Tunes. For the Use of the Religious Society of Romney. Collected by the Author of the Christian's Daily Manual, London 1724.

Among the 27 hymns at the end of the volume are some from Austin and Playford.

51

Cf. original preface to A Guide to Prayer, 1715 p.VII.

52

It will be seen in Chapt. 6 and 9, below, that Watts owed much in the field of Psalmody to Anglican sources. For biographical informations about Mason cf. Dictionary of National Biography: Julian, op. cit., p.349: pp.716-17: Conder, Josiah, The Poet of the Sanctuary, 1851.

53

In a letter from Newington, 24th October, 1741, Watts says that Mason's "heart was always in Heaven".

54

Cf. Selborne, op. cit., p.168.

55

Cf. Julian, op. cit., p.349
Frere, op. cit., p.LXXXIII.
Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, vol.VII, p.34.

56

Horder, W. Garrett, The Hymn Lover, 1889, p.85.

57

Macdonald, George, England's Antiphon, p. 272.

58

Wright, Thomas, The Life of Isaac Watts, London, 1914, p.89.

59

- 59 For examples of conceits, etc. in Mason, see Spiritual Songs H.1, v.3, lines 7-8, v.5, lines 7-8, v.11, lines 2-4: H.3, v.4, lines 1-2; H.VII, v.1, lines 7-8.
- 60 Cf. Horder, op. cit. p.86
- 61 Ibid. p.88
- 62 Hood, E. Paxton, Isaac Watts his Life and Writings..., p.85
- 63 Cf. Chapt. 9, below.
- 64 Wright, op. cit. p.89
- 65 Cf. preface to 1701 edition of Mason's Spiritual Songs.
- 66 Cf. Manning, Bernard L., The Hymns of Wesley and Watts, 1944, pp. 94ff.
- 67 We omit reference to John Cosin and Samuel Crossman who have little, if any, additional significance in this history of hymnic development before Watts. Addison and the Supplement to the New Version are outside our period.
For biographical reference to Thomas Ken, see Julian, op. cit., pp.348, 616ff, and Gillman, Frederick John, The Evolution of the English Hymn, 1927, pp. 172ff.
- 68 Ken's group of hymns consists of The Midnight Hymn, The Morning Hymn and The Evening Hymn. The first, because of the occasion for which it was written, has not found a place in our hymn-books. Cf. Julian, op. cit., p.348.
- 69 Cf. Gillman, op. cit., p.175.
- 70 Ibid, p.166.
- 71 Cf. The Christian Psalmist, 8th ed. Glasgow, 1837. Introductory Essay, pp.XVIII-XIX.

- 72 For examples of these qualities in the work of Watts see Chaps. 7 and 9 below.
- 73 Cf. Benson, Louis F., The English Hymn: Its Development and Use in Worship, London, 1915, pp.82-5.
- 74 Hamilton, James, Our Christian Classics, London, 1859, vol. 1, p.379.
- 75 Poetical Fragments...3rd ed., 1699, No.4 Divine Love's Rest, p.45
- 76 Ibid. No.3 The Resolution, p.37.
- 77 George MacDonald, op. cit. p.233.
- 78 Quoted in R.H. Coats, Types of English Piety, Edinburgh, 1912, p.267.
- 79 Cf. The Saints Everlasting Rest...9th ed. 1662, Bk. 1, Chapt.4 Sect.VI, p.27; Bk. IV, Chapt.5, Sect.VII, p.688; also Christian Directory III, 9, 15.
- 80 Preface (1692) Sect. 7.
- 81 Two Centuries of Select Hymns and Spiritual Songs. By W.B. 1670 "The Epistle to the Reader" para.1.
Cf. also Julian, op. cit., p.116.
- 82 Monthly Preparations for the Holy Communion by R.B. to which is added Suitable Meditations before, in, and after Receiving. With Divine Hymns in Common Tunes, Fitted for Publick Congregations or Private Families, London, 1696.
- 83 George Macdonald, op. cit., p.233.
- 84 Preface to Poetical Fragments.
- 85 Cf. Preface to Horae Lyricae, 1709, and Preface to Hymns and Spiritual/

Spiritual Songs, 1707, p.VII, passage beginning, "The most frequent Tempers and Changers of our Spirit", in Appendix below, p. 35

86 Cf. The Saints Everlasting Rest, op. cit., IV, Chapt.5, Sect.VII, p.688, also Curwen, J. Spencer, Studies in Worship-Music, 1880, quotation from Baxter on p.43 and Preface to Poetical Fragments.

87 Cf. Appendix below, p.8.

88 Quoted in Curwen, op. cit., p.43

89 A Short Essay Toward the Improvement of Psalmody, 1707,

90 Cf. Appendix below,
For Baxter's conception of the supremacy of praise in worship see citations in note 79 above.

91 Cf. Chapt. 4, below.

92 These writers are Matthew Henry, William Barton, Joseph Boyse, Joseph Stennett, Daniel Burgess and Mr. Pomfret. cf. below.

93 A Short Essay, op. cit., Cf. Chapt. 6, below.

94 The hymn in question is A Thanksgiving after the Receiving of the Lord's Supper, beginning "The Lord be thanked for his gifts".

95 Cf. Chapt. 4, below.

96 For historical background see Baird, Charles W., A Chapter on Liturgies, London, 1856, Chapt. IX, p.163.

97 Isaac Watts' group of Communion Hymns is in Book 3 of Hymns and Spiritual Songs. The first edition (1707) had 22 Sacramental Hymns. Cf. Appendix, p.78 below for details.

98/

- 98 Mr. Richard Baxter's Paraphrase on the Psalms of David in Metre...1692 Preface, Sect.5.
- 99 A Petition for Peace: with the Reformation of the Liturgy... 1661, p.41.
- 100 Cf. Preface to The Psalms of David Imitated..., 1719 p.XXVII, para. 1, also Chapt. 6, below.
- 101 Cf. Paraphrase on the Psalms of David..., p.263.
- 102 Cf. Procter, Francis, A History of the Book of Common Prayer, 1898, p.119.
The Benedicite or the "Song of the Three Children" is actually part of the Greek addition to the third chapter of Daniel. It is however, a paraphrastical exposition of the 148th Psalm, and was used as a hymn in the later Jewish Church, and was commonly sung in the Christian Church in the fourth century. Some writers of that age speak of it as Scripture.
- 103 Cf. Chapt. 4, below.
Thomas Bradbury's reference to "Watts' (w)hims" illustrated the attitude of left-wing Independency to Watts' reform.
- 104 Cf. Songs of Praise Discussed..., 1933. Intro. p.XV.
- 105 Paraphrase on the Psalms of David..., Preface Sect. 7.
- 106 Ibid, sect. 8.
- 107 Cf. Julian, op. cit., p.116.
- 108 The story of the contest between the partisans of Rous and Barton is admirably told in S.W. Carruthers, The Everyday Work of the Westminster Assembly, Philadelphia, 1943, Chapt. XII, pp.115-19.
- 109 Cf. Julian, op. cit., p.346.
- 110 This volume, Julian thinks (cf.p.116), was published against Barton's wish.

- 111 Julian, op. cit. p.346, col.1, final para.
- 112 Julian, op. cit., pp.346, 510.
- 112^b. There are Sacramental Hymns, however, in Mason's Spiritual Songs and Penitential Cries.
- 113 Cf. Dictionary of National Biography, vol.ii, p.1041.
Julian, op. cit., p.168.
- 114 Cf. Benson, Louis F., op. cit., p.87.
- 115 Sacramental Hymns Collected (chiefly) out of such Passages of the New Testament As contain the most suitable matter of Divine Praises in the Celebration of the Lord's Supper.
Published both in Dublin and London, 1693.
Boyse had published another collection of hymns in 1691, which does not concern us here. (Cf. Julian, op. cit., p.168).
- 116 The ministers supporting Boyse's Hymns were Thos. Toy, Rob. Henry, Elias Travers, Nath. Weld, Alex. Sinclare, Thos. Emlin.
- 117 Cf. A Short Essay, op. cit., .
- 118 Cf. also Preface to Watts' Hymns and Spiritual Songs (2nd ed.1709) passage beginning "In these I expect to be often censured..."
- 119 Cf. Watts' preface to Hymns and Spiritual Songs (1707) p.XII, para.2. Appendix, p.38.
- 120 Cf. Julian, op. cit., p.1091, and Dictionary of Nat. Biog., vol.XVIII, p.1037.
- 121 Cf. Whitley, Congregational Hymn-singing in England. 1933, pp.100-1.
- 122/

- 122 Cf. Chapt. 4, below.
- 123 Eight of Stennett's hymns were in use as late as 1896.
Cf. Julian, op. cit., p.1091.
- 124 Cf. Chapt. 7 and 9 below, for comments on the structure of Watts' hymns and hymn-book.
- 125 Our study of the vocabulary of Watts' verse has revealed many refs. to the words 'chariot' and 'chariots'. In Watts it seems to be a figure of his mysticism or 'otherworldliness' (cf. Chapt.2) The word is found in the following Psalms, Hymns and Lyrics:
Psalm 12, C.M. v.6; Ps.68 2nd Pt. v.1; Ps.104, v.2;
Hymn 61, Bk 1, v.5 (practically in Stennett's words); Hymn 76, Bk 1, v.5; Hymn 45, Bk 2, v.1; Hymn 62, Bk 2, v.2;
Hymn 102, Bk 2, v.3 (practically repeats Stennett's words)
Hymn 6, Bk 3, v.6; Hymn 21, Bk 3, v.2.
Horae Lyricae: Bk 1. Jesus the only Saviour, v.13;
 Bk.1 Forsaken yet hoping, v.6; Bk.2 To John Shuts, Esq., v.1;
 Bk 2. To the Reverend Mr. John Howe, v.1;
 , Bk 2 The Adventurous Muse, v.4;
 Bk 2 To Mr. Nicholas Clarke, v.3;
 Bk 2 The Happy Man, v.3.
Miscellanies; iii. The Hebrew Poet, v.8.
- 126 Cf. Dictionary of National Biography, vol.III, p.308.
- 127 Ibid.
- 128 It should be remembered, however, that in the first edition of Horae Lyricae 1705, and in the first edition of Hymns and Spiritual Songs, 1707, Watts himself had printed groups of Christianized Psalms. (Cf. Chapt. 2 and 5 of the Thesis). It is not inconceivable that Burgess, as Watts later, was influenced in his attitude to the Psalms in 'Christian worship by the work John Patrick had done (cf. Chapt. 6 of Thesis).
- 129 Burgess paraphrases the following psalms:-
 63,66,67,72,73,74,84,85,89,90,92,93,94,95,97,99,100 (2 metres),
 103,107,110,111,112,113,117 (3 metres), 119 (22 parts), 121,122,
 123,124,125,127,128,130 (2 metres), 131,133,135,136,138,139
 (2 metres), 143,145,146,147.

- 130 This was one of the few Psalms that Watts, with clearer judgment, did not Christianize.
- 131 Cf. earlier on in this chapter for Barton's deviation from Baxter's ideal.
- 132 Cf. Conder, Josiah, *The Poet of the Sanctuary* (1851) for the contents of Bury's book.
 Julian, *op. cit.*, p.349, dates the first edition 1707.
 Benson, *op. cit.*, p.88 and footnote, p.89 dates it earlier.
- 133 Cf. Chapt. 6 below.
- 134 Cf. Dictionary of National Biography vol.iii, p.62.
- 135 Cf. Curwen, *op. cit.*, pp.48ff.
 Whitley, *op. cit.*, pp.100-1.
- 136 Curwen, *op. cit.*, p.50. Keach's hymnodic affiliations were probably with the Dutch Anabaptists, see Whitley, *op. cit.*, There are indications, too, that he had studied the hymns of John Mason.
- 137 Cf. Julian, *op. cit.*, p.610.
 Whitley, *op. cit.*, p.94 dates the beginning of Keach's hymn-writing in 1664.
- 138 Cf. Spiritual Melody, 1691, Hymns 204, 187, 106, 107, 61.

Keach's Spiritual Melody is probably our first evangelical Hymn-book. The hymns in it are for the most part not literal paraphrases but versified homilies on some specific Scripture text. The hymns are no longer a supplement to metrical psalmody. Metrical Psalms appear in part 9, as an appendix to the hymns, and only those Psalms are retained which fit easily into the evangelical framework of the book. In Keach's schema of worship-song some provision is made for most of the occasions of his day:-

- Part 1. God the Father.
 2. God the Son.
 3. God the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Trinity.
 4. The Christian Gospel.
 5. The Christian Life.
 6. Angelology (perhaps, The Communion of Saints).
 7. The Church and Eschatology.
 8. Occasional Hymns:
 Sacramental;
 before and after Sermon;
 Closing of Ministry;
 Thanksgiving Hymns;
 Hymns for Good Friday, Harvest, etc.,
 9. Select Psalms (some evangelised).

¹³⁹ Cf. Preface to Hymns and Spiritual Songs, 1707, p.VIII, Appendix, p.32.

THE BOOKE OF
PSALMES:

COLLECTED INTO ENGLISH

Meeter, by THOMAS STERNHOLD, IOHN
HOPKINS, and others: conferred with
the Hebrew; with apt Notes to sing
them withall.

Set forth and allowed to be sung in all Churches,
of the people together, before and after Morning
and Evening Prayer: As also before and after Sermons, and more-
ouer in priuate houses, for their godly solace and
comfort, laying apart all vngodly Songs
and Ballads, which tend onely
to the nourishment of
vice, and corrup-
ting of youth.

JAMES V.

If any be afflicted let him pray: if any be merry let him sing Psalmes.

COLLOSSIANS III.

*Let the word of God dwell plentifully in you, in all wisdom, teach-
ing and exhorting one another, in Psalmes, Hymnes, and spiritu-
all Songs, and sing unto the Lord in your hearts.*



TITLE-PAGE OF STERNHOLD AND HOPKINS PSALTER

CHAPTER 4THE WORSHIP SCENE OF DISSENT

Isaac Watts' reform of Psalmody was part of a wider design to improve Puritan worship as a whole. In the Preface to the first edition of Hymns and Spiritual Songs, 1707, which will be found in facsimile in the Appendix, p.32, Watts writes:

"Perhaps the Modes of Preaching in the best Churches still want some Degrees of Reformation, nor are the Methods of Prayer so perfect as to stand in need of no Correction or Improvement: But of all our Religious Solemnities Psalmodie is the most unhappily manag'd".

Watts tackled the worst feature of Puritan worship first, but he did not neglect the others.

One of the chief qualities of his mind was clarity, but it cannot be said that it was a great virtue of the preachers of Watts' youth and early manhood. Under the guidance of John Wilkins,¹ Watts would not only have the congregation sing with understanding but hear with understanding too. He tried to reform the preaching of his day, especially the structure of sermons. He began his ministry in an age of what he calls, felicitously, "branching sermons". Even pulpit giants/

giants like Owen and Howe dissipated their mighty energies and confused their hearers by the minute and sometimes irrelevant subdivisions of their sermons. Watts tells us that he had sat under this method of preaching until he had thought of Ezekiel's vision in the valley full of bones; "behold they were very many and very dry". In another place, he says,

"Preachers talk reason and religion to their auditories in vain, if they do not make the argument so short as to come within their grasps, and give a frequent rest to their thoughts".

He pruned his own sermons as ruthlessly as he did his hymns, that they might be direct, simple in structure, and understood by the ordinary worshipper. Reverence and grandeur are rarely sacrificed in the process.

Watts' reforming zeal extended also to public prayer. The official demand for conformity to the Book of Common Prayer had had the effect of stiffening the Puritan insistence on freedom in worship. And so it was only a Directory, with latitude in the use of it, that the Westminster Assembly produced when the Puritan ascendancy came.² We know from the comment of two Scottish Presbyterians that the English Independents did not take kindly even to mere direction in liturgical matters. Robert Baillie, in 1646, says;

"Concerning the circumstances of the worship of God, they will have nothing determined...(but) to be left so free that all Directories are against their stomachs".³

Robert/

Robert Kirk who visited London, 1689-90, with a keen eye for the adjuncts of worship, does not appear to be agreeably impressed with what he sees and hears in some of the meeting-houses of the Metropolis. In most of them there is a departure from the scheme and content of public prayer provided by the Directory. The personality and tastes of the preacher frequently determine the type of worship. In some churches only the Lord's Prayer is used. In others, prayer has largely become an instrument of propaganda, or the repetition of the substance of the sermon.⁴ Episcopalian writers were even more critical, as is to be expected. Benjamin Calamy, Prebendary of St. Pauls mentions with scorn the

"indecent postures and antick gestures at their devotions
...the extravagancies and follies some of them are guilty
of in their extemporary effusions..."⁵

Samuel Pepys in his Diary under 23rd September, 1660, writes:

"Before Sermon I laughed at the reader, who in his prayer desires of God that He would imprint His word on the thumbs of our right hands and on the right great toes of our right feet".

The zeal to avoid a merely aesthetic religion is a commendable feature of Puritanism. But towards the end of the seventeenth century, liturgical anarchy characterised the Services of the meeting-houses. So far as public prayer was concerned, "an entire dependence on sudden motions and suggestions of thought" (to use Watts' words), had resulted in poverty of thought, crudities of speech, and lack of order and form.

Early/

Early in his ministry Watts had done something to reform this state of things. He gave to a Society of young Dissenters a series of addresses on public prayer, which were published under the title of A Guide to Prayer, in 1715. The book is really a Method of Prayer for the Churches of Dissent - an attempt on a very much slighter scale to do for social prayer what he had already planned to do, and in part achieved, for public praise.⁶ Watts' reforms of preaching, prayer and praise were of a piece; and the same set of principles underlie and inform all three.

But it was in the field of sung praise that Watts achieved his worship reform most completely. To appreciate the revolutionary nature of this achievement we must see it against the background of the psalmodic practices of his age. These are briefly suggested in Thomas Leishman's admirable notes on the text of A Directory for the Publique Worship of God...,⁷ He tells us that "Singing of Psalms" had been left out of the title of the Directory and was added only later on, and that the omission reflected the divided attitude to psalm-singing in the second half of the 17th century. In view of the controversy about singing in worship, Leishman says, there were members of the Westminster Assembly who would have preferred to see the matter left as an open question. For instance, the Independent Nye spoke "much against a tie to any Psalter and something against the singing of paraphrases". Leishman includes an interesting quotation from/

from Robert Baillie's A Dissuasive..., 1646, pp. 29, 81, in which Baillie refers to the more extreme section, who in their abhorrence of set forms of any kind, had singing prophets "making one man alone to sing, in the midst of the silent congregation, the hymns which he out of his own gift had composed". Such fantastic opinions apart, the prevalent feeling of the time was that singing was a profitable but not a necessary act of public worship.

The performance of Psalmody left very much to be desired. Long after Watts' reform it was often the worst feature of public worship. Church singing had been spoiled by a strict and unwarranted adherence to some words in the Westminster Directory that stated,

"But for the present, where many in the Congregation cannot read, it is convenient that the Minister, or some other fit person appointed by him and the other Ruling Officers, do read the Psalm, line by line, before the singing thereof".

This practice of "lining out" was intended as a temporary concession to the unlettered worshipper. But it became a hoary custom that could not easily be changed.⁸ While deprecating it, Watts thought fit to accept it in his own reform.⁹ But to dispense with such an unnatural way of singing, which hampered the spirit of worship, preachers like Matthew Henry and John Howe often began and ended morning service with the same two psalms, which by frequent use the people had by heart.

The tunes in the Metrical Psalter were unisonal and syllabic, and were 'started' or 'pitched' by the minister, parish clerk or precentor. The/

The Diary of Judge Sewall¹⁰ offers many an amusing picture of the difficulties involved in this method of public singing. Writing under 5th July, 1713, he says:

"I try'd to set Low-Dutch Tune and fail'd,
Try'd again and fell into the tune of 119th Psalm".

Under 2nd February, 1718, we find:

"In the morning I set York Tune, and in the second going over the Gallery carried it irresistibly to St. David's, which discouraged me very much. I spoke earnestly to Mr. White to set it in the afternoon, but he declined it".

Such experiences we may be sure were not confined to New England Congregations.

As the seventeenth century progresses, we notice in general literature satirical references to psalm singing. The lack of refinement in its execution is reflected in Thomas Mace's Musick's Monument, 1676:

"'Tis sad to hear what whining, toting, yelling, or screeking there is in many country congregations".

Edward Phillips, 1630-96 ?, Milton's nephew and a renegade Puritan, draws a waspish picture of the citizens of London at worship

...singing with woful noise
Like a cracked saints' bell jarring in the steeple
Tom Sternhold's wretched prick-song to the people .¹¹

Contemporary with Watts, and expressing the growing scorn for the poetical qualities of Sternhold, Hopkins, Wisdome, and the rest, there is the final letter of Tom Brown's Letters from the Dead to the Living, 1702. It was written about the same time as Enoch Watts' historic letter to his brother which surveys the banal psalmody of his day and pleads/

pleads with Isaac to publish his hymns and revive the dying devotion of the Church.¹²

Thus Church psalmody had reached a very low ebb by the beginning of the eighteenth century, when Watts set about to improve it. Three methods of reform were open to experiment:

1. Reformation of the performance of Psalmody.
2. Reformation of the language of Psalmody.
3. Reformation of the content of Psalmody.

The first was by far the most popular approach. The publications of the Playfords, and the encouragement of psalm-singing in the homes of the people and in Religious Societies by the Church, had been attempts, not without success, to revive psalmody by improving the manner of its execution.

Alongside of this, beginning with the work of Wither, carried forward by men like Woodford and Denham under the influence of the Royal Society, and later by Patrick and others, there had been serious efforts to reform the language of the metrical Psalter. Even the time honoured Old Version was purged of some of its archaisms in 1694.¹³ Tate and Brady's New Version was in line with this reforming purpose. And Watts' work for psalmody was in sympathy with the efforts that had been made to renovate its style and language.

But before Watts' reform little had been done, except sporadically and with only local success, to improve the content of psalmody. Richard Baxter and his followers, with few exceptions, left the content of the traditional psalmody alone, supplementing it with Gospel/

Gospel hymns. The later work of Barton, and that of Burgess and Keach, shows signs of a dawning awareness that something needed to be done to the content of the psalms to fit them for use in Christian worship. But none of these men possessed the intellectual equipment, scientific mind or force of personality to present his case convincingly, and to carry forward his reform on a sufficiently wide scale in the teeth of the most powerful opposition.

Contemporary with the publication of Watts' Hymns and Spiritual Songs, and probably stimulated by that book, a co-operative effort was made by a few London Churches, Independent and Presbyterian, at the Weighouse Presbyterian Chapel, Eastcheap, to improve the performance of psalmody in worship. The experiment is recorded in Practical Discourses of Singing in the Worship of God: Preach'd at the Friday Lecture in Eastcheap. By Several Ministers, London, 1708. The volume contains half-a-dozen sermons on psalmody by six ministers of note in London.¹⁴ A short preface (pp.iii-viii) states the reason for the Lecture:

"The Duty of Singing in the Worship of God had been very much neglected and unskillfully perform'd among our selves in comparison of the greater knowledge and better Care of the foreign Churches; till some late Attempts were set on foot to teach the Art, and incourage (sic) the Practice. Among other Designs of this Nature, the week-day Lecture, at which the following Sermons were preach'd, and that has been continu'd several Years for the Service of Religion, and particularly the Encouragement of Singing (the italics are ours), has not been the least considerable, nor the least serviceable and successful".

Evidently Watts' attempt to improve psalmody was no isolated and unique venture. For some considerable time such attempts had been made/

made in Metropolitan Dissent, and it would be strange if young Watts had not known of them.

The Eastcheap Lectures reveal the unsatisfactory performance of congregational praise in the dissenting churches at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and attack, in particular, the 'evil' results of the practice of 'lining-out'. In the 4th sermon, Objections consider'd against the Duty of Singing, Thomas Reynolds,¹⁵ the minister of Little Eastcheap, deprecates the continuance of a method of singing which so manifestly hinders the spirit of worship:

"There remains only one thing we are concern'd to plead for, and this is a practice which hath lately obtain'd in some of our Congregations; and that is singing of Psalms without reading. This has been a matter of scruple to some people. To remove an old custom, tho' a bad one, is like removing the antient (sic) landmarks. But if people did duly inquire into the first reason of this custom they who are such sticklers for it (if I am not mistaken) would not express such a zeal for its continuance".

He goes on to say, recalling the statement of the Westminster Directory, that the practice arose,

"owing to the ignorance of people, who living under the darkness of popery, vast multitudes of them could not read. For this reason our first reformers thought it better to practise this way of singing Psalms, by the clerk's reading, line after line, than that such great numbers (as then were) should be depriv'd of the benefit of this ordinance".

Reynolds points out that through the blessing of God that time of gross ignorance is over, and most people can read or could do so with some little pains.

"And therefore I think 'tis high time to reform from a custom... which all who will use their understanding must acknowledge does labour with many inconveniences and defects".

He/

He describes some of these 'inconveniencies', appealing to the experience of his hearers:

"....this way of singing by reading....causes a very great interruption in the musick, and thereby...makes the Exercise abundantly more flat and dull than otherwise".

He adds that it is also a great hindrance to the understanding of what we sing:

"for the reading of the line does frequently break the sense, and till that be given whole and intire (sic) we know not what we sing, but are left to uncertain conjectures; and before the whole sense be read out, we have frequently forgotten what we first sang".

Watts too, appreciated the psychological defect inherent in this method of singing and did something to rectify it:

"I have seldom permitted a Stop in the middle of a Line, and seldom left the end of a Line without one, to comport a little with the unhappy Mixture of Reading and Singing, which cannot presently be reformed."

(Preface to Hymns and Spiritual Songs, 1707, p.VIII)

This way of singing, Reynolds thinks, puts a great check on our affections and is a hindrance to the exercise of our graces in worship. He suggests therefore, that the Churches should adopt the custom, common on the continent,

"of singing with books in our hands, (for) having the sense whole and intire under our eye, our affections are more easily excited, and assisted to make melody to God in our hearts".

With his mind's eye on an actual congregation during the singing of the Psalm, he adds, half-amusedly:

"by every one's having a book in his hand there is this conveniency, that it keeps us more intent and close to the business before us, and prevents that wandering of the eye, and careless gazing, which is too often observ'd".

Reynolds/

Reynolds had travelled fairly widely and had studied at Geneva and Utrecht; and he finally refers to the psalmodic practices of the French and Dutch churches, which he had often witnessed :

"persons who had no books join as readily in singing as those that had them: by frequent reading of the Psalms, they have so transcrib'd them into their memories (sic), as at last to lay aside their books".

In Sermon 5, Directions for the Duty of Singing, (pp.163-6), by Mr. Newman, some of the above arguments are repeated. In addition the lecturer stresses

"the desirability of having words and tune wedded together (and of choosing tunes) as the generality of the worshippers can join in".

He also makes an appeal for bodily deportment suggesting reverence and devotion.

These lectures on the whole are concerned with the improvement of the manner of psalmody. This is markedly the case in the discourses by Thomas Bradbury. (perhaps the most virulent contemporary opponent of Watts' reform),¹⁶ Harris, Newman and Gravener. These four leaders of London Dissent, while anxious to reform the ill performance of psalmody, wished to do so mainly by improving the mechanism and manner of congregational singing.

True as this is, these Practical Discourses reveal to the vigilant reader another interest. Barely a year has elapsed since Isaac Watts published his Hymns and Spiritual Songs, and here in London a few influential ministers, chiefly Presbyterian, like Thomas Reynolds and Jabez Earle¹⁷ are sharing some of his hymnodic ideals/

ideals, and expounding them in public. These Discourses indicate the gradual transition from the old method of improving psalmody, by attending to the manner of its execution, to the new and revolutionary method used by Watts, namely, by a root and branch renovation of its spirit and content. As we have said earlier on (chapt.3) these men had been prepared to sponsor the new reform by the example of the later hymnists of the Baxterian School:-Barton, Boyse and Burgess. And there is little doubt that Thomas Reynolds and Jabez Earle had read Watts Hymns: sometimes their words are merely echoes of Watts' Preface and Short Essay. These leaders of praise were probably amongst those ministers whom Watts mentions in his Preface (1707), who had

"long groan'd under this Inconvenience, and have wish'd rather then attempted a Reformation...".(p.VI).

Is it too much to suppose that they were amongst those ministers and "private Christians" who supported his 'Hephaestian' task, of whom Watts writes in the same Preface, p.VI:

"At their importunate and repeated Requests I have for some Years past devoted many Hours of leisure to this Service".

Be that as it may, some of Watts' new ideas are insinuated into this conservative series of lectures on Psalmody: and perhaps here we have the first platform for Isaac Watts' reform of public praise by the improvement of its content.

For instance in Jabez Earle's Sermon, Of the Nature of the Duty of Singing (pp.3-4) we read:

"....I conceive that whatever songs are scriptural are the proper/

proper object of singing...especially those which treat of Christ and the benefits of his redemption. For I can by no means be of their mind, who in the public Congregations would confine us to that collection of the Jewish Psalmody, which is call'd the Psalms of David..." (Italics are ours).

Earle is moving away from the bibliolatry of the literalists, who had cramped the psalmody of the Reformed Church, when he says earlier in this Discourse:

"the object of singing..is Divine and Spiritual Songs, i.e., composures which contain a divine or spiritual sense.... " (Italics are ours)

These ideas appear again and again in Thomas Reynolds's Sermon:

"Tho we approve...the practice of our churches in singing David's Psalms, yet we are not against other composures. We do not this out of any mean, irreverent and unbecoming thoughts of David's Psalms, or that we would discard these from having their part in the Worship of God; but that adding others to them, we may still have a fuller set of Psalms, and a more abundant variety of spiritual songs to promote and further the celebration of God's praise in the Christian Church". (p.117. Italics ours).

But however much Earle and Reynolds, and some other Christian ministers and laymen amongst the Dissenters, might have encouraged Watts, it was left to himself to take the initiative, and enunciate the new reform in a systematic fashion, and brave alone the storm of disapproval (sometimes of abuse) that gathered over his head, and defy with youthful daring "that monster, custom, who all sense doth eat".

In the preface to James Hamilton's The Psalter and the Hymn-book, 1865, we are told of a certain church treasurer who before his death/

death bequeathed his mantle to a younger brother, saying -

"I am going the way of all the earth; but you will be a member of the Session in my stead. Let me give you one rule for your guidance; oppose all impruvements".

Thus Hamilton humorously illustrates the tyranny of custom. One writer called it:

"old custom....the idol of the stupid part of the vulgar".

Watts' iconoclasm earned for him the opposition of many besides "the stupid vulgar". For it was no mere improvement of psalmody that he intended, no mere addition of Gospel hymns to the metrical psalter as it stood, which had been Baxter's ideal, and was still the ne plus ultra of the more radical reformers of Eastcheap. Watts wanted a root and branch renovation of the content of the Jewish Psalms themselves. The full force of his logic was not seen till 1719, when his Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament appeared. Then some who had enthusiastically supported his earlier publication within English Presbyterianism fell away from his standard. Watts' reform, carried to its logical conclusion, meant an almost complete departure from the traditional psalmody in the worship of the Christian Church.

Watts wrote in the days of his youth:

Custom, that tyranness of fools...
My genius storms her throne".

The words exactly describe the spirit that informs all his work for the reformation of Psalmody.

His historic preface of 1707 opens with these words:

"While we sing the Praises of our God in his Church,
we are employ'd in that part of Worship which of all
others is the nearest a-kin to Heaven; and 'tis pity
that/

that this of all others should be perform'd the worst upon Earth. The Gospel brings us nearer to the heavenly State than all the former Dispensations of God amongst Men; And in these very last Days of the Gospel we are brought almost within sight of the Kingdom of our Lord; yet we are very much unacquainted with the Songs of the New Jerusalem, and unpractis'd in the Work of Praise. To see the dull Indifference, the negligent and thoughtless Air that sits upon the Faces of a whole Assembly while the Psalm is on their Lips, might tempt even a charitable Observer to suspect the Fervency of inward Religion, and 'tis much to be fear'd that the Minds of most of the Worshippers are absent or unconcern'd."

There had been writers before Watts who had criticised the praise of the churches, but their criticism for the most part had been self-conscious, literary, aloofly doctrinaire.¹⁸ But as we read this preface, and Watts' other writings on hymnology (cf. Appendix), we find ourselves out of the realm of abstraction: we stand alongside of the kindly critic watching an early eighteenth century congregation at its psalm singing, and hearing his gentle comments. There is an invigorating breath of realism in all Watts' writing on hymnological themes.

But in this preface the criticism of psalmody has changed its incidence. It no longer falls upon the untutored worshippers, or on the traditional manner of singing, but on the time-honoured metrical psalmody itself. This is made clearer by the words that immediately follow the above quotation:

"I have been long convinc'd, that one great Occasion of this Evil arises from the Matter and Words to which we/

confine all our Songs. Some of 'em are almost opposite to the spirit of the Gospel: Many of them foreign to the State of the New Testament, and widely different from the present Circumstances of Christians....."

There you catch the new accent in the criticism of the Church's Psalmody. Its radical weakness is now, not its incompleteness as the left-wing lecturers at Little Eastcheap thought, but the inadequacy of its content to express the truth of the Gospel, and the whole gamut of the believer's emotions. Before this preface appeared, there had been no lack of gentle physicians to apply soothing emollients to the surface blemishes and sores of the Church's praise, and assure the enfeebled Psalmody with soft words, that by the application of this remedy and that it would soon be well and on its feet again. But Watts was not of their persuasion. His was the rôle of a surgeon who, with scalpel in hand, presses the necessity of a radical treatment. But that is too violent a description of the Watts we see in this preface. He happens to be a clever psychologist too. Not wishing to fright the patient and so undo the cure, or to do violence to the hoary prejudices of the friends in the sick chamber, he conceals his scalpel, hiding his true intent, until the time should be more psychologically propitious for a major operation. This principle of festina lente, operative in the whole of Watts' work, and contributing quite a deal to its ultimate success, guided him here. And yet, despite his gentleness and caution, there are passages in this early preface, which reveal the point of the gleaming/

gleaming scalpel sticking out of his pocket:

"....You will always find in this Paraphrase dark Expressions enlighten'd, and the Levitical Ceremonies, and Hebrew Forms of Speech chang'd into the Worship of the Gospel, and explain'd in the Language of our Time and Nation; and what would not bear such an Alteration is omitted and laid aside. After this manner should I rejoice to see a good part of the Book of Psalms fitted for the use of our Churches, and David converted into a Christian".

(Preface, p.X. Italics ours).

The point is this. From the outset of his hymnological activity Watts purposed a re-creation of the traditional psalmody along evangelical lines. A supplemental Christian hymnody, such as Baxter and his disciples had envisaged, was not enough. There would still be a harmful dichotomy in public praise. Congregational praise could never be really satisfactory if it were theologically and experientially 'a house divided against itself'. The sacrosanct metrical psalter itself, in great measure, needed to be both Christianized and 'naturalized'. Some few hymnists before Watts had realised this fact, and some half-hearted work had been attempted. But it was Watts who approached the task with a definite philosophy of Christian worship; and the line he struck out was bold and historically decisive.

He had a precedent for his psalmodic reform in Scripture and Church History, but it was not to any merely external authority that he appealed. He carried his reform to the bar of the worshippers experience.¹⁹ Its legitimacy could best be settled there. In this sense his work has links with Baxter. But Watts was really the first hymn-writer to give due place to the subjective aspect of worship/

worship-song, and to take into full consideration the psychology of the congregation in its praises. This is a side of his work that has not been sufficiently stressed. Indeed, it has hardly been stressed at all. Luther's hymnody had found room for this subjective factor, though it would be false to say that Watts derived the insight from Luther. Watts was really a spiritual child of the seventeenth century, the age of Hamlet, Descartes, Rembrandt, Burton's Anatomy, of introspective Diaries and Memoirs, the age of Quakerism with its doctrine of the Inner Light. There can be little wonder he stresses the importance of the believer's experience. The theology of Owen and the Puritans was a Theologia pectoris - an experimental theology which had hardly been known since Augustine. It was from Puritanism that Watts derived the experiential accent in his psalmodic reform. It is heard distinctly in his hymns:

Let Heathens scoff and Jews oppose,
 Let Satan's Bolts be hurl'd,
 There's something wrought within you shows
 That Jesus saves the World.²⁰

The same appeal to experience appears often in his devotional writings in prose:

"Though I am not able...to solve all the difficulties in the Bible, nor maintain the sacred authority of it against the cavils of wit and learning, yet I am well assured, that the doctrines of this book are sacred and divine; for when I heard and received them, they changed my nature, they subdued my sinful appetites, and raised me from death to life..."²¹

English Puritanism in discourse, prayer and treatise had given a prominent/

prominent place to experience. The purpose of prayer, writes John Owen,

"is, that believers may therein apply themselves to the throne of grace for spiritual supplies according to the present conditions, wants, and exigencies of their souls." ²²

Watts carried this principle into the field of praise. It, like spoken prayer, had to do with the present experience and needs of the worshipper. With a psychological insight almost modern in its lucidity, Watts saw that a congregation would never sing tolerably well if the praise provided were unintelligible and foreign to its experience. Some words of William Law express very aptly Watts' attitude:

"....if you celebrate the ruling passion of any man's heart, you put his voice in tune to join with you". ²³

Because the Psalms of David as a whole, for all their devotional value and long association with the Church, did not "celebrate the ruling passion" of the Christian worshipper's heart, Watts felt at liberty to deal ruthlessly with them.

"When we are just entring (sic) into an Evangelic Frame by some of the Glories of the Gospel presented in the brightest Figures of Judaism, yet the very next Line perhaps which the Clerk parcels out unto us, hath something in it so extremely Jewish and cloudy, that darkens our Sight of God the Saviour: Thus by keeping too close to David in the House of God, the Vail (sic) of Moses is thrown over our Hearts. While we are kindling into divine Love by the Meditations of the loving Kindness of God, and the Multitude of his tender Mercies, within a few Verses some dreadful Curse against Men is propos'd to our Lips...which is so contrary to the New Commandment, of loving our Enemies. Some Sentences of the Psalmist that are expressive of the Temper of our own Hearts and the Circumstances of our Lives may compose our Spirits to Seriousness, and allure/

allure us to a sweet Retirement within our selves;
 but we meet with a following Line which so peculiarly
 belongs but to one Action or Hour of the Life of David
 or Asaph, that breaks off our Song in the midst; our
 Consciences are affrighted lest we should speak a Fals-
 hood unto God".²⁴

Apart from a reference on p.viii of the preface to Hymns (1707),
 and the Advertisement to the Reader of the Psalms (1719) - both of
 which are given in full in the Appendix²⁵ - Watts does not concern
 himself very much with the mechanics of public praise. This does
 not mean that he had no musical taste. He shared the Puritan's
 love of music like Milton, Baxter and Norris, and was himself fond
 of the lute.²⁶ But he could not believe that the real issue lay
 between an imperfectly and more perfectly performed psalmody.

'Perfect' praise to Watts is not that which approaches more nearly
 an abstract ideal of technical correctness, but that which, issuing
 from living experience, is informed with the breath of reality. It
 must be the congregation's own praise, coming freely and gladly out
 of its own situation and circumstances, not the praise of Moses or
 David, even if these judged by a purely aesthetic canon are vastly
 more perfect. There is, to Watts' thinking, an infinitely greater
 thing than technical proficiency in the praises of the Church, and
 that is the sincerity of the Saints.

Finally, it would be interesting and useful to know what was
 sung in the Independent Meeting-house at Southampton under the
 ministry of Nathaniel Robinson, before Watts wrote and successfully
 introduced his New Song to the Lamb that was slain (Hymns and
Spiritual/

Spiritual Songs, Bk 1, H.1). If Watts' preface to the Hymns and his Short Essay on Psalmody are based purely on the worship-song of his home church, it would seem that the staple praise was some metrical paraphrase of the Psalms of David. On the other hand, the historic letter from his brother Enoch, March 1700,²⁷ who presumably worshipped with him at Southampton in the momentous period of hymn-writing, June 1694 to October 1696, reveals a fairly wide familiarity with the works of Watts' predecessors in the field of hymnody. Enoch mentions, in addition to a number of Psalm versions, the hymns of Bunyan, Mason, Keach and Barton. In addition, the story behind Watts' first hymn to be sung at Southampton, first made public in Gibbons' Memoirs, and used by all subsequent biographers, seems to suggest that hymns were sung in his home church before Watts began to write his own:

"The occasion of the Doctor's hymns was this, as I had the account from his worthy fellow-labourer and colleague, the Rev. Mr. Price, in whose family I dwelt above fifty years ago. The hymns which were sung at the Dissenting meeting at Southampton were so little to the gust of Mr. Watts, that he could not forbear complaining of them to his father. The father bid him try what he could do to mend the matter. He did, and had such success in his first essay that a second hymn was earnestly desired of him, and then a third, and fourth, etc. till in process of time there was such a number as to make up a volume".²⁸

It is improbable, as the next chapter will show, that Watts' hymnological writings reflect merely or mainly the psalmodic practices of his home church at Southampton. He seeks through them to commend his reform to the Church as a whole, at least to the entire body of Dissent. Accordingly, he begins from the customary, and/

and almost universal adherence to the metrical Psalms.

Brother Enoch's knowledge of hymnological matters does not of itself prove that hymns were sung at the Southampton Meeting before Watts wrote them. Enoch was a younger brother, and, out of a spirit of hero-worship, most likely shared in his clever brother's researches. Enoch's knowledge might have been derived in that way. That the Watts' home was a seed-plot of hymnological activity, in which father, mother and brothers were engaged in the years 1694-6, seems to be supported by Gibbons' account of the origin of Isaac's first congregational hymn. The Watts family, on both sides, occupied an honourable and influential place in the life of the Church; and it was through their influence that young Watts' hymns were adopted sporadically in its worship.

It should be added that the reference to hymns in Gibbons' quotation is no proof in itself that Southampton Dissenters had a hymnody prior to Watts' provision. The word is ambiguous and was frequently used loosely as a synonym for psalms. Be that as it may. It is difficult to account for the alacrity in which the Southampton church responded to Watts' compositions, even if they were sponsored by his esteemed parents, if it had not been beforehand steadily broken in by the use of hymns that were then accessible. Watts' first hymn was presumably written after a pattern already familiar to the congregation. It was, as we have said, a free paraphrase of separated scriptural verses, and so probably were the other hymns that/

that immediately followed it (cf. Hymns, Book 1). We have noticed that the only writer before Watts who adopted this method of composition was William Barton; and it seems very probable that some edition of his Centuries was used in the public worship of the Southampton Meeting.²⁹

NOTES

Chapter 4

- 1 Cf. chapter 1, above.
- 2 A Directory for the Publique Worship of God....., London, 1644
- 3 Robert Baillie, A Dissuasive from the Errours of the Time...., 1646.
- 4 Maclean, Donald, London at Worship 1689-90, (from the Ms of Robert Kirk), Manchester, 1929, pp.13-21.
- 5 Calamy, Benjamin, Some Considerations about the Case of Scandal or giving offence to Weak Brethren, 1683, p.56
Cf. also The Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence...2nd ed., London, 1693 pp.93ff. for Episcopalian criticism of extemporary prayer in Scotland.
- 6 Cf. Escott, Harry, Isaac Watts' A Guide to Prayer, London, 1948. In the original preface to A Guide to Prayer, 1715, Watts writes: "The inward and spiritual Performance of this Worship is taught us in many excellent Discourses; but a regular Scheme of Prayer... has been much neglected".
- 7 Cf. Leishman, Thomas, (Editor), The Westminster Directory, Edin. 1901.
- 8 The Scots Commissioners to the Westminster Assembly were averse to the innovation of "reading the line". And it is one of the ironies of the history of British Psalmody that this practice, introduced into Scotland from England, should have become so sacrosanct in the northern kingdom, that the proposal to discontinue it in 1746 and return to the earlier and more natural system of continuous singing, was denounced as a modern innovation. It was one of the contributory sources of Scottish dissent. And/

And much angry feeling was excited in England and New England when the method of continuous singing was eventually adopted.

- ⁹ Cf. Preface to Hymns and Spiritual Songs (1707) p.VIII.
Appendix to Thesis, p.36.
Passage beginning:

"I have seldom permitted a Stop, etc."

- ¹⁰ Cf. Diary of Samuel Sewall, 5th Series, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

Sewall was born at Basingstoke, Hampshire, 1652. Emigrated in childhood to Newberry, Mass. Ordained to the ministry, but turned printer. In 1684 became a member of the Court of Assistants for Massachusetts. Visited England, 1688. Became Chief Justice 1718. Died, Boston, 1730.

- ¹¹ Satyre against Hypocrites, 1689.

- ¹² Cf. Hood, E. Paxton, Isaac Watts his Life and Writings..., p.85.

- ¹³ The conservative attitude to the Old Version is best seen in Watts' contemporary William Beveridge (1636-1708), Bishop of St. Asaph. In his Defence of the Old Singing-Psalms, 1710, he expresses a preference for Sternhold and Hopkins on the ground of its antiquity, closeness to the original Hebrew, plainness of English style and simple vocabulary, and its "grave and solid" character. Compared with it Tate and Brady, he thinks, is "very light and airy". He is not in favour of the linguistic changes that had been made in the text of the O.V.: they are "unauthorised", un-English, and beyond the comprehension of the ordinary worshipper. Cf. Beveridge's Theological Works, Oxford, 1846. Vol.VIII. pp.615, 616-23, 626-7, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633-8, 639-42.

- ¹⁴ The titles of the sermons are as follows:-

- i. Of the Nature of the Duty of Singing. By Mr. Earle.
- ii. Arguments to prove the Obligation of the Duty. By Mr. Bradbury.
- iii. Of the Excellence of Singing. By Mr. Harris.
- iv. Objections against Singing consider'd. By Mr. Reynolds.
- v. Directions for the right Performance of the Duty of Singing. By Mr. Newman.
- vi. Exhortations to Singing. By Mr. Gravenor.

- ¹⁵ Cf. Practical Discourses of Singing, etc., Lect.iv. 138ff.
Dictionary of National Biography for short life of Reynolds.
- ¹⁶ Cf. Waddington, John, Congregational History 1700-1800, London, 1876. p.11
For Bradbury's criticism of Watts' Psalmody, cf. Davis, A.P. Isaac Watts His Life and Works, pp.60-1, and Hood, op. cit., pp.193-5.
- William Romaine (1714-95) repeated Bradbury's criticism of Watts in his An Essay on Psalmody. 1775:
"....time was, when no less a man than the Rev. T. Bradbury in his sober judgment, thought so meanly of Watts' Hymns as commonly to term them Watts' Whymns. And indeed, compared to the scripture, they are like a little taper to the sun; as for his Psalms, they are so far from the mind of the Spirit, that I am sure if David was to read them, he would not know any one of them to be his".
- ¹⁷ Cf. Dictionary of National Biography, vol.vi. p.319.
Practical Discourses, etc. pp.63-4, 116-7.
- ¹⁸ This was not so in the case of Benjamin Keach. cf. Chapt.3 above.
- ¹⁹ Cf. below.
- ²⁰ Cf. Divine Hymns Composed on the Subjects of the Sermons, C.M. Hymn for Serm. 1,11,111, v.4.
- ²¹ Cf. Devout Meditations from Dr. Watts, 1791, pp.19-20.
- ²² Cf. A Brief Instruction in the Worship of God, 1667, in The Works of John Owen, Edinburgh, 1851. vol.XV. p.511.
- ²³ William Law, A Serious Call....., Chapt.XV, p.269. Methuen.
A Library of Devotion.

- ²⁴ Cf. Preface of Hymns and Spiritual Songs, 1707, pp.v-vi. Appendix to Thesis, p. 34.
- ²⁵ Cf. Appendix to Thesis, p.69.
- Cf. Hood, op. cit., p.82, for allusion to Watts' fondness for the lute.
- ²⁶ For the Puritan's love and practice of music see Joseph Crouch, Puritanism and Art, London, 1910, pp.232ff. and Percy A. Scholes, The Puritans and Music, 1934.
- ²⁷ The letter is given in full in Hood, op. cit., pp.84-7.
- ²⁸ Thomas Gibbons tells us that he got this piece of information from a "Mr. John Morgan, a minister of very respectable character now living at Romsey, Hants".
- ²⁹ In the preface to the 2nd edition of Horae Lyricae, 1709, Watts refers to the singing of hymns in church:
 ".....they love the driest Translation of the Psalms best. They will venture to sing a dull Hymn or two at Church, in Tunes of equal Dulness....."

(6th edition, 1731, p.VII)

A

Short Essay

Toward the Improvement of Psalmody: Or, An Enquiry how the Psalms of *David* ought to be translated into Christian Songs, and how lawful and necessary it is to compose other Hymns according to the clearer Revelations of the Gospel, for the Use of the Christian Church.

TO speak the Glories of God in a religious Song, or to breath out the Joys of our own Spirits to God with the Melody of our Voice is an exalted Part of Divine Worship. But so many are the Imperfections in the Practice of this Duty, that the greatest Part of Christians find but little Edification or Comfort in it. There are some Churches that utterly disallow Singing; and I'm perswaded, that the poor Performance of it in the best Societies,

WATTS' REVOLUTIONARY MANIFESTO, as it first appeared in Hymns & Spiritual Songs, 1707 (see chapter 5)

CHAPTER 5ISAAC WATTS' REVOLUTIONARY MANIFESTO

Chronologically, Isaac Watts was a hymnist before he turned his attention to the reform of metrical psalmody. But this was an accident. His early piece-meal hymnody at Southampton supplied the immediate need of a local church, with more advanced ideas about congregational praise, and which seems to have already used hymns in its worship. But such sporadic hymn writing would not long satisfy Watts' philosophic mind. He wished to commend the Christian hymn to the Church as a whole; and such a purpose demanded a full-dress Apologia of an Evangelic hymnody. Therefore the logically prior writing in Watts' reform is not the 1707 preface to Hymns and Spiritual Songs, but A Short Essay Toward the Improvement of Psalmody, which followed the text of that volume, and was never again published during the author's life. This essay is the quarry from which he drew material for the preface to the Hymns and for the later preface to The Psalms of David Imitated....., 1719.

The importance of the Short Essay to the student of Watts' work is/

is that it shows how the two main branches of his reform - Psalmody and Hymnody - are organically related, and that his work on the Christian Psalm though perhaps chronologically a later product, was logically prior to his work on the Christian Hymn. So the Essay, which he had hoped to present in fuller form, is actually the Revolutionary Manifesto of a new system of Church Praise.

For easy reference this Essay, as it appeared in the original edition of Hymns and Spiritual Songs, 1707, is given in facsimile in the Appendix to this Thesis (see pp.8-31)

The Essay divides itself roughly into two sections: on pp.233-55, Watts states his case for the Christianized Psalm, and then on pp.256-76 he shows how the deficiencies of the Christianized Psalm lead quite naturally to the use of Hymns. In spite of his "youthful aggressiveness" we perceive here, as in other things, that he introduces his reform gradually, almost imperceptibly, according to the principle of festina lente.¹

The opening pages are concerned mainly with linguistic matters, and are of little value, except that they show the thoroughness of Watts' scholarship and research.

The argument proper begins on page 241 when Watts reminds the reader that the time-honoured metrical psalms are really no true translation of the Word of God, but "inventions of men" (cf. also Preface to Psalms (1719) p.XIX). Rhyme and short stanza forms trammelled/

trammelled the varied expression of the original Hebrew, and rendered literal translation impossible (p.243). The English metrical psalm far from being sacrosanct, was a convention and a crippling one, though hallowed by long usage in the Church, and from being bound together with the Scriptures. (cf. preface to Horae Lyricae (1705), p.VIII). But, Watts goes on, it is not necessary for us to sing the Word of God. While it is essential to keep close to the original when God's Word is read, our response to that Word in singing cannot be so stereotyped, as worship-song must be our own peculiar response:

"By Reading we are instructed what have been the Dealings of God with Men in all Ages, and how their Hearts have been exercis'd in their Wandrings (sic) from God, and Temptations, or in their Returns and Breathings towards God again, but Songs are generally Expressions of our own Experiences, or of his Glories. ...We breath (sic) out our Souls towards him...." (p.243)

That is the most important statement in the Essay. It shows how Watts worked from a clear philosophy of Christian worship. Singing is the response of the redeemed community. He takes up this idea again and again in this and his other hymnological writings (cf. preface to Psalms, p.X; preface to Hymns, p.IV, where he speaks of the singing Congregation's "ascent toward Heaven".)

In the interest of reality, and to make the Psalms our own response to God's Word, he uses the method of Imitation. He shows us that this method is found in Scripture itself (pp.245-7), and outlines his own manner of imitating the Psalms of David:

1. Historical and doctrinal Psalms are used as present meditations, though pronouns, etc., may require to be/

be altered to turn some songs into Histories. p.245.

2. Other Psalms cannot be used in the above way, being full of idiosyncracies of circumstance, time, place, etc. These peculiar features must be removed. p.247.
3. Wherever possible the Psalms are 'naturalised' - made British- p.246.
4. Often their content is evangelised. p.247.

He anticipates the objection that he will be accused of tampering with God's Word, by repeating that God's Word still abides for instruction by being read. It is another matter with sung praise which should be a response to that Word. (It should be said here however, that Watts also regarded praise as an instrument of edification. We have dealt with this side of his work in chapters 7 and 9, below). Besides, he adds, even when the Psalms of David are sung in worship, a selective principle is in operation. And even in Jewish worship it is improbable that all the Psalms were used. Watts implies that our English translators were off the track when they metricised the whole Psalter for public worship. (cf. preface to Psalms, p.IX). To illustrate how this selective principle has been adopted in congregational praise he cites Patrick's preface to his version of the Psalms and mentions Patrick's work in the field of metrical Psalmody which was popular with some congregations of dissenters (p.248)².

Watts now forestalls the further objection that there is no need to omit or amend parts of the text of the Psalms. Why not sing the words of David as they stand, and think the evangelical interpretation as you sing? (p.250). This would not make for reality in worship. Besides, not one in twenty worshippers is capable of understanding/

understanding the Psalmist's deep and dark expressions let alone interpreting them. He quotes, as he often does, directly or indirectly in this Essay, the guidance of St. Paul: we must sing with understanding. (cf. preface to Psalms, p.XII). There is, moreover, in public worship the need for something approaching uniformity of interpretation.

Even the best metrical translations of the Psalms, he thinks, are inadequate. Often by their use, devotion is interrupted by religious anachronisms and meaningless words and phrases, (p.251). He draws a picture, mildly humorous, of worship in his day. But pulls himself up in his gentle fun-making. He would not be thought to make fun of the old Hebrew modes of expression. They are the beauty of Hebrew praise, but they will not do for Christian song, (p.252). He owes more than he can say in the nourishment of his spiritual life to the Book of Psalms. (cf. Watts' eulogy of the Psalter in the preface to the Psalms of David Imitated...., pp.XXVII-VIII). Although there are parts of the Hebrew Psalter that may be retained in the worship-song of the Christian Church, in translating the rest two rules should be observed:

1. We should translate them as David might have done had he been a Christian. As Watts says later in his preface to the Psalms, (p.XX), we must "teach (our) Author to speak like a Christian". The Secret of the power and adequacy of Scripture songs, he proceeds, is that they exactly fit and express the need of the worshipper at a specific/

specific time and under particular circumstances. They have concreteness, particularity, and they are dated. Accordingly, if we are to use these Scripture songs they must first be adapted to our affairs, concerns and circumstances. (cf. also preface to Psalms, p.XIX). Had David been born in Gospel times he would have been, as Watts tries himself to be, the Poet of the Atonement. (p.253)

2. The Hebrew Psalms are to be used only as patterns of what, psychologically, praise should be. This is exactly how the Psalms were used, Watts reminds us, in the Primitive Church. His method of imitation finds its precedent there. The Psalms are never slavishly copied in early Church usage: they serve only as models. He points out that the early Christians borrowed comparatively little from the Book of Psalms, and where they so borrow, they appropriate the matter as their own, and accordingly make modifications and additions.

"...tho the Disciples and primitive Christians had so many and so vast Occasions for Praise, yet I know but two Pieces of Songs they borrow'd from the Book of Psalms. One is mention'd in Luke 19.38. where the Disciples assume a Part of a Verse from the 118th Psalm, but sing it with Alterations and Additions to the Words of David. The other is the Beginning of the second Psalm, sung by Peter and John and their Company, Acts 4. 23,24, etc. You find there an Addition of Praise in the Beginning, 'Lord thou art God which hast made Heaven and Earth, and the Sea, and all that in them is'. Then there is a Narration of what David spoke, 'who by the Mouth of thy Servant David hast said, etc. Next follow the two Verses of that Psalm, but not in the very Words of the Psalmist: Afterwards an Explication of the 'Heathen' and the 'People', (viz.) the 'Gentiles' and 'Israel': The 'Kings' and/

and the 'Rulers', (viz.) 'Herod' and 'Pontius Pilate', and the 'Holy Child Jesus' is God's 'anointed'. Then there is an Enlargement of the Matter of Fact by a Consideration of the Hand of God in it, and the Song concludes with the breathing of their Desires towards God for Mercies most precisely suited to their Day and Duty...(pp.254-5: this method is seen illustrated in Watts' Short Metre version of Psalm 2, Psalms of David Imitated, 1719)."

Watts regards himself more as a reactionary than reformer. As he brings the first section of his Essay to a close with one of his warm and soaring perorations, he prays that he might be used of God to bring about a 'returning Glory in the Churches' (p.255). All he proposes to do is to imitate the methods and practices of the New Testament Church, extending them to meet modern requirements. It is a returning glory he seeks.

Finally, we discover in this first part of the Short Essay that Watts' hymnological work was guided by an evolutionary principle:

"Every Beam of new Light that broke into the World gave occasion of fresh Joy to the Saints, and they were taught to sing of Salvation in all the Degrees of its advancing Glory". (p.254)³

He grasped the truth of progressive revelation (so far as human apprehension is concerned), and with it the need for a parallel evolution in praise. Psalmody could not be a static thing, but the living and evolving expression of an ever advancing experience of Divine Grace.⁴

In the second section of the Essay, Watts goes on to demonstrate that there is also need for other Spiritual Songs in Christian worship. If, as he has said, our metrical psalms, even when they are/

are closest in content to the Bible, are in reality the inventions of men, why not go all the way and produce 'human composures'? (p.256). And if singing in worship should be the expression of present experience, there are manifestly occasions when Psalms and Scripture Songs cannot meet our requirements.(256-7). In addition, we have a higher revelation of God than David had. "Where can you find a Psalm that speaks the Miracles of Wisdom and Power as they are discover'd in a crucify'd Christ?" (p.258).

The spiritual inspiration of this Essay, as indeed of the preface to the Psalms (cf.p.XX), is St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians.⁵ It is liberty in the Spirit that Watts claims for the psalmodic practices of the Church. And in this sense he approaches the Lutheran position:

"...shall it be suppos'd that we must admonish one another of the old Jewish Affairs and Ceremonies in Verse, and make Melody with those 'weak and beggarly Elements, and the Yoke of Bondage', and yet never dare to speak of the Wonders of new Discovery except in the plain and simple Language of Prose? (p.259)

But the objection will be made, Watts imagines, that these evangelical hymns for which he is now pleading are already to be found in the New Testament itself. Why then write others? Whilst thanking God for these Scripture evangelic hymns, he points out that they are seldom used. Besides they are too fragmentary and too few to express the 'glorious Revelations' of the Gospel in their fulness. He clinches his argument by applying the principle of Christian liberty:

"nor can we suppose God excludes all other Parts of the Gospel from Verse and Singing". (p.260)

In/

In support of this he reminds the reader that all our prayer and praise as Christians should be, according to our Lord's command, in the name of Jesus Christ. He shows the inconsistency of praying and preaching in His name, if when we sing we remain in the old Dispensation. (p.261 cf. also preface to Psalms, p.XVIII). The Christian Church cannot have a static system of hymnody: new occasions, new emphases call for new hymns (p.263). Even the Jews sometimes found the ancient songs did not fit their present requirements, and made others.

"God did not think any of his own inspired Hymns clear and full and special enough to express the Praise that was his due for new Blessings of Grace and Providence...and 'tis but according to his own Requirement, that the British Islands should make their present Mercies under the Gospel the Subject of fresh Praises". (p.263.)

God does not expect the Church to limit itself to the Spiritual Songs of the New Testament any more than he does to the Psalms of the Old:

"(the New Testament hymns) are given to us as small Originals, by Imitation whereof the Churches should be furnished with Matter for Psalmody, by those who are capable of composing spiritual Songs according to the various or special Occasions of Saints or Churches". (pp.263-4)

To regard the New Testament hymns as fixed forms of praise for all time

"would be to sink the Gospel, which is a Dispensation of the Spirit of Liberty, of Joy, and of Glory, beneath the Level of Judaism, when the Saints were kept in hard Bondage, and had not half so much Occasion for Praise". (p.264)^e

Watts now appeals to the worshipper's experience (cf. Chapt. 4 above). Surely hymn-singing is lawful, because it has produced 'Divine/

'Divine Delight' and 'spiritual Joy and Consolation' (pp.265-6).

Along with this appeal to experience, he incorporates the argument from Galatians,

"....if we would but stand fast in the Liberty of the Gospel, and not tie our Consciences up to meer (sic) Forms of the Old Testament, etc." (p.266).

But as he will not have Christians sing anything 'without due knowledge and Conviction' he proposes to answer a few further objections that might be raised (p.266).

Is not the singing of Psalms and Old Testament songs commanded by God? Yes, but only of the Israelite. If you take the commandment to apply to yourselves, why should you abhor musical instruments in worship. These are equally commanded of the Israelite. Besides if these commands bind us to sing only inspired praises, they bind us equally to inspired forms of prayer. We do not keep to the latter, why then should we be sticklers for the former? (p.267).

Does not the example of Scripture direct us to inspired matter for singing? Yes, but again these examples are Jewish, and reflect a very ceremonious worship, and they do not prove that the Jews themselves were forbidden upon all occasions to use more private composures in their synagogues. The selective principle already referred to (pp.247-8) was adopted even in Jewish worship.(pp.267-8). If what you say be true, are we likely to make better songs than the inspired ones? Do we not dishonour God by our inferior hymns? The objection would be valid, says Watts, if we applied the principle underlying/

underlying it to the other parts of worship. If this jealousy for the perfection of inspired forms be sincere, why then should we not use scriptural forms of praying and preaching, as well as of singing? (p.267. cf. also preface to Psalms (1719) p.XVIII).

But, adds Watts, in a most important passage, which has already claimed our attention (cf. chapt.4 above), the contrast between inspired and uninspired hymns is not the true issue. The Spirit is not concerned to produce perfect hymnody, but out of his desire for reality in worship, he accommodates Himself to the circumstances and time of the worshipper. 'Perfect' psalmody is not that which most nearly reaches an abstract ideal, but that which fits close to a personal and historical situation. It is the breath of reality in our praises that matters most of all (p.259). The same idea is expressed again in A Guide to Prayer. But he pulls himself up, as he did earlier on (p.251). He by no means excludes from psalmody the use of Bible words and phrases. They are, on the contrary, of extraordinary assistance both in praise and prayer. The Spirit attests to that. But before using them we must make them our own (p.269). In the same way as sermons in a large sense may be called the Word of God, so may humanly-composed hymns (p.270). This we have noticed was the position of Baxter who really began the movement to emancipate Psalmody from the oppression of literalism (cf. chapt.3 above), but it was Watts who carried Baxter's ideas/

ideas to their logical conclusion, and won the first great battle in the campaign for Psalmody's Liberty.

But a further objection may arise: in Scripture we have the promise of the Holy Spirit's assistance in preaching and prayer, but not in the composing of hymns. How then can we lawfully write such and sing them in the Church? In answer, Watts reminds the objector that there are many performances necessary for edification within the Church for which there is no mention, explicitly, of the aid of the Spirit, such as Bible-translation, homiletics, and the writing or study of religious books. Nor is there, he adds, any express encouragement of the Spirit's presence in turning the Psalms of David into English rhyme and metre. Were we to put all the emphasis on a charismatic worship, we should have nothing singable at all. Watts is no doubt thinking of the extreme position taken by some Baptist congregations who would not permit conjoint singing, even of metrical psalms, but who had "singing prophets" (cf. chapt. 4 above). The Primitive Church, Watts agrees, had a charismatic ministry, but not wholly so. The ordinary assistance of the Holy Spirit is invoked in the duties of preaching and praying, why not then in the other part of public worship, the composing and singing of hymns? (pp. 270-1)

We have seen immediately before Watts the emergence of a group of ministerial hymnists within Dissent. It was Watts who gave this movement/

movement prestige and impetus. He holds (p.271) that in every age there should be some ministers fitted for the task of supplying 'Hymns to answer the chief Designs and Wants of the Church for that Day for publick Worship'. There is nothing despotic about Watts' hymnology. True it is that his work for church praise did come to exercise a tyranny as the metrical psalmody had done before it. Watts' Psalms and Hymns were almost 'deified' in some quarters, as Sternhold and Hopkins had been. No claim was made by Watts himself to substantiate this despotism. His philosophy of praise as we see it in the Short Essay could never have been the source of a static and authoritarian hymnody.(chapt. 9).

Watts envisages a final objection: ought we not to sing what God has given for this end, and not 'the Inventions of Men?' As on pp.241-3, he replies that the metrical psalms themselves are human inventions, necessary to keep decent order and decorum in public worship. He quotes Boyse's preface in this regard (p.272). There are some, he continues, who will freely use as God's Word parts of Scripture strung together and arranged for congregational singing. Such rhymed paraphrases (he is thinking probably of Barton's Centuries)⁷ have no precedent in David's use of the Old Testament. David's method of using Scripture was Watts' own method. David dealt with the Law in an assimilative and creative way. So should we deal with the Gospel in our songs. He repeats what he said earlier/

earlier on: the New Testament text as it stands is intended mostly to be read for instruction and not to be sung in public worship. The promiscuous use of chapters and verses of the New Testament for singing is, Watts maintains, not in the will of God; but the composition of 'spiritual Songs by humane (sic) Art agreeable to the Sense of Scripture and the Christian Faith' is. (pp.272-3). Thus Watts' work, as we have said (chapt. 3 above) is linked on the one hand with Baxter's, who departed from the literalism of the Scripture paraphrase and insisted only that the 'sense' of Scripture be retained in hymns, and on the other hand with Keach who also used the hymn for purposes of instruction in the doctrines of the Christian Faith.

So far in this second part of the Short Essay Watts has drawn his arguments in the main from two sources: the Bible, and the experience of the worshipper. It is only now in the closing pages that he appeals to human authorities for the adoption of hymns. Hymns, he says, have been used in Germany, in the Old Version of the Psalms, and in some Dissenting churches (p.273). He quotes Pliny's letter to Trajan in the beginning of the second century (p.273). He mentions that in the time of Tertullian hymns were associated with the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper (p.273).⁸ He refers to the Psalms and Hymns of Nepos (p.273), and to Paulus Samosatenus' rejection of hymns to Jesus Christ as an heretical attitude (p.274). He makes the statement that humanly-composed Christian/

Christian hymns helped to confute early heresies in the Church (p.274).

Then comes the Conclusion (pp.274-6) in which Watts tells the reader that the Essay has been written at the request of ministers and friends who have publicly and privately used hymns, especially at the Lord's Supper (p.275). He is not sanguine of bringing everybody over to his own conviction of the legality and necessity of human composes:

"Scruples and Reliques of an old Opinion will perhaps hang about their Consciences still". (p.275)

As a matter of fact they did. Contemporary leaders of religion, like Thomas Bradbury and later churchmen like William Romaine opposed Watts' ideas.⁹ Like Baxter before him, Watts has no desire to split the Church over the question of hymn-singing (p.276).¹⁰

In the last paragraph he speaks of the faults in his work. Watts lacks the self-assurance of John Wesley.¹¹ He tells us that it was difficult for him "to sink every Line to the Level of a whole Congregation, and yet to keep it above Contempt" (cf. also preface to Psalms, pp.XXV-VI). This 'democratisation' of church praise cannot always succeed, and he knows it:

"The Blemishes...may serve to awaken some more pious and judicious Fancy to a more successful Attempt; and whoever shall have the Honour of such a Performance, I promise myself a large Share in the Pleasure".(p.276).

It was not Watts' wish to lord it over the Psalmody of the Church, but to set in motion a reform of Christian praise that should continue through all the ages of the Church's mission upon earth/

earth - a reform to be renewed as fresh circumstances in the work and worship of the Christian Fellowship arose. And whenever and wherever a Christian hymn is sung throughout the English-speaking world with gladness and sincerity, whether it came first from his warm heart, or from the heart of another writer before or since his day, it is humanly-speaking, his triumph that we are celebrating.

NOTES

Chapter 5

- 1 This principle appears often in Watts' strategy as a hymnologist. cf. chapt. 4 above, and chapt. 7 below, for other examples of it.
- 2 Cf. chapt. 6, below.
- 3 Cf. Milton's Areopagitica: "For such is the order of God's enlightening his Church, to dispense and deal out by degrees his beam, so as our earthly eyes may best sustain it".
English Reprints edited by Edward Arber, 1868, p.77.
For other Miltonic influences and echoes in Watts, see chapt. 1 above. Notes 4, 6, and 9.
- 4 Cf. Last para. of present chapter.
- 5 Cf. chapt. 6.
Pauline influence is clearly perceptible in the Short Essay, in which Watts deals with the liberty theme of Galatians after St. Paul's method in Romans of an argument with imaginary objectors.
- 6 Cf. chapt. 6.
- 7 Cf. chapt. 3 above and chapt. 4 last para.
- 8 Cf. chapt. 3 above.
- 9 Cf. chapt. 4, note 16.
- 10 Cf. Mr. Richard Baxter's Paraphrase on the Psalms...., 1692, Preface, Sect. 7 (bottom).
- 11 Cf. A Collection of Hymns, For the Use of the People called Methodists. 3rd edition, 1782. Preface p.IV. Sect. 5.

THE
P S A L M S
OF
D A V I D

IMITATED in the Language of the
New Testament,
And apply'd to the
Christian State and Worship.

By I. WATTS.

Luke xxiv. 44. *All things must be fulfilled which were written in — the Psalms concerning me.*

Heb. xi. 32. — David, Samuel, and the Prophets. Ver. 40. — *That they without us should not be made perfect.*

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. CLARK, at the Bible and Crown in the Poultry; R. FORD, at the Angel in the Poultry; and R. CRUTTENDEN, at the Bible and Three Crowns in Cheapside. 1719.

CHAPTER 6THE CHRISTIANISED PSALM

From the beginning of his work in hymnology Isaac Watts wished to see the traditional metrical Psalter, for the most part, evangelised for use in Christian worship. He had himself experimented with the Christianised psalm, for in the preface to the Hymns, 1707, he writes:

"In the first, second and third Psalms especially, I have attempted a Specimen of what I desire and hope some more capable Genius will undertake!"(p.X)

And in the 1709 preface he adds:

".....because I cannot persuade others to attempt this glorious work, I have suffered myself to be persuaded to begin it and have through divine goodness already proceeded half way through".

In the 1712 preface this last sentence becomes:

".....persuaded to begin it, and had finished it before this time, if the necessary Duties of my Station, and other preventing Providence had not delay'd my Pursuit of it. I own my self much obliged to the World who have receiv'd so favourable an Opinion of it before-hand, that I am daily urg'd to proceed in the Work: and if God afford me Health and Leisure, I hope e're (sic) long to fulfil my Design".

In the original preface to Divine Songs, 1715, Watts excuses himself from writing a greater number of Moral Songs for children on the ground/

ground that he has yet to finish his version of the Psalms:

"Besides, if I had Health or Leisure to lay out this way, it should be employ'd in finishing the Psalms, which I have so long promised the World".

Lastly, in the seventh edition of the Hymns, issued in 1720, there appeared at the end of the Advertisements this note:

".....Since the Sixth Edition of this Book the Author has finished what he had so long promis'd, (viz.) The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament; which the World seems to have received with Approbation, by the Sale of some Thousands in a year's Time. There the Reader will find those Psalms which were left out of all latter Editions of these Hymns, inserted in their proper Places. It is presumed that that Book, in conjunction with this, may appear to be such a sufficient Provision for Psalmody, as to answer most Occasions of the Christian Life: And, if an Author's own Opinion may be taken, he esteems it the greatest Work that ever he has publish'd, or ever hopes to do for the Use of the Churches".

March 3, 1719/20.

These passages extending over a period of twelve years illustrate again how Watts introduced his psalmodic reform gradually, inoculating his public with small doses of Christian psalmody for a long time, till by slow degrees they were induced to receive the reform in its completeness, in 1719. Festina lente, as we have said, is a guiding principle of Watts' strategy as a psalmodic reformer.

The final quotation seems to indicate that Watts regarded his evangelical paraphrase of the Psalms as completing his significant work in Church praise, and as constituting his magnum opus in that field.

Alongside of the writing of hymns between 1694 and 1709, Watts was/

was also composing evangelical psalms, and after the latter date to 1719, his hymnological labours were confined almost entirely to this genre.

Actually, the germinal nucleus of Watts' famous Imitation appeared in print as early as December, 1705, in the now very rare first Edition of Horae Lyricae. Therein is a group of imitations of the Psalms done in the manner afterwards so familiar, all of which were omitted from later editions. They form a part of Book 1, Songs and Hymns Sacred to Devotion, (pp.54-62) and are entitled:

"An Essay on a few of David's Psalms Translated into Plain Verse, in Language more agreeable to the clearer Revelations of the Gospel".

The reader will find a copy of this group of historic psalm versions in Chapter 2 above, which deals with the contents of Horae Lyricae.

There are four pieces in the group. The first is Psalm 1 entitled The Happy Saint and the Cursed Sinner (p.54), afterwards it was altered into the third L.M. version of that Psalm in the Imitations of 1719. The second is Psalm III, which Watts calls Doubts and Fears Suppres'd (sic), (p.56), to be much altered in 1719. Next comes Psalm C with the title Praise to the Lord from All Nations, (p.59) to be transferred with emendations to the 1719 volume. The last is Psalm CXXXIII, Brotherly Love, (p.61), substantially the C.M. rendering of 1719, happily with the alteration of some verbal infelicities.

Thomas Milner alone of Watts' biographers appears to have known of/

of the existence of this very early group of psalm imitations.¹
 Perhaps its existence should force us to revise the traditional
 view of the evolution of Watts' work. In point of historical fact
 he might have experimented in the Christian Psalm before he turned
 his hand to the Gospel Hymn. But we have no conclusive evidence
 for this, nor is it accessible at this late date.²

This experimental group of imitations was transferred to the
 first edition of Hymns and Spiritual Songs (1707), not appearing
 again, however, in the second edition of 1709 or in later issues.
 Psalm 1 becomes Hymn XXXI of Book 1, p.31; Psalm III becomes
 Hymn XLVII of Book 2, p.46; Psalm C becomes Hymn XLIII of Book 1,
 p.42; and Psalm CXXXIII becomes Hymn XLIV of Book 1, p.43. In
 the process of transference some lines and verses of the original
 pieces are changed. We notice at this early stage a development
 in Watts' critical faculty, particularly in his re-writing of the
 third stanza of his version of Psalm 133. In Horae Lyricae (1705)
 it had appeared as:

'Tis like the Oyl on Aaron shed,
 Which choice Perfumes compose,
 Down softly from his Reverend Head
 It trickled to his Toes.

which in 1707 becomes:

'Tis like the Oil descending sweet,
 On Aaron's Reverend Head,
 And gently flowing to his Feet
 Thro' all his Garments spread.

In addition to these four imitations transferred from Horae
Lyricae,

Lyricae, the 1707 edition of the Hymns has ten fresh psalm imitations included in Book 1. These are:

- Psalm 2 Christ Crucified, Risen, Interceding and Reigning, which appears as Hymn IV, p.5.
- Psalm 125 The Saints Security and Moderated Afflictions, two versions, which appear as Hymns XXII and XXIII, pp.22-23.
- Psalm 131 Humility, which appears as Hymn XXXIII, p.33.
- Psalm 134 Devotion in the Church, which is Hymn XXXIV, p.33
- Psalm 67 The Churches Increase and Prosperity, which becomes Hymn XXXV, p.34.
- Psalm 73 vv. 22,3,6,17,18,20, The Prosperity of Sinners Cursed which is Hymn XXXVI, p.35.
- Psalm 90 vv. 5,10,12. The Frailty and Shortness of Life which is Hymn XXXVII, p.36.
- Psalm 84 vv. 1,10, etc., The Beauty of Publick Worship: or, Delight in Ordinances, Hymn XXXVIII, p.36.
- Psalm 148 Universal Praise to God, Hymn XLVI, p.44.

Again, this group, like the earlier one in Horae, was incorporated, with alterations, in The Psalms of David Imitated, 1719. It should be added that Book 1, Hymn XXIV, The Rich Sinner dying, in the original edition of Hymns and Spiritual Songs had an extra four verses, based on Psalm 49, vv.6-9. These verses, two of them much altered, were transferred to The Psalms of David Imitated to make part of Psalm 49 in that book. Moreover, Hymns and Spiritual Songs retained some free paraphrases partly based on the Psalter. In the 1707 edition there are three such hymns; in Book 1:

nos./

195.

nos. 24, 53, and 57.

In the 1709 edition there are three more:

nos. 79, 80 and 136.

As the original group of the 14 Psalm Imitations that appeared in Hymns and Spiritual Songs is no longer accessible in Britain, we present it here in facsimile:

HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS, 1707/

HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS, 1707, pp. 5, 6, 23, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36,
37, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47

B. I. Spiritual Songs.

* Good-Will to Men, To Angels Joy,
" At the Redeemer's Birth.

8 In Worship so Divine
Let Saints imploy their Tongues;
With the Celestial Host we join,
And loud repeat their Songs.

9 " Glory to God on High,
" And Heavenly Peace on Earth,
* Good-Will to Men, To Angels Joy,
" At our Redeemer's Birth.

IV. Christ Crucified, Risen, Interceding and Reigning, Psal. 2.

1 **W**hy did the Jews proclaim their Rage?
The Romans, why their Swords
(employ?)
Against the Lord their Pow'rs engage
His dear Anointed to destroy.

2 " Come, let us break his Bands (they say)
" This Man shall never give us Laws;
And thus they cast his Yoke away,
And nail'd the Monarch to the Cross.

3 But God who high in Glory reigns,
Laughs at their Pride, their Rage controlls;
He'll vex their Hearts with inward Pains,
And speak in Thunder to their Souls.

4 " I will maintain the King I made
" On *Sion's* Everlasting Hill;
" My Hand shall bring him from the Dead,
" And he shall stand your Sov'reign still.

B 3

5 " His

- 5 " His wondrous Rising from the Earth
 " Makes his Eternal Godhead known ;
 " Then I declare his Heav'nly Birth,
 " *This Day have I begot my Son.*
- 6 " Ascend, my Son, to my right Hand,
 " There Thou shalt ask, and I bestow
 " The utmost Bounds of Heathen Land ;
 " To thee the *British* Isles shall bow.
- 7 " But all that hate the Saviour-God,
 " Both *Western Priest*, and *Eastern Turk*,
 " Shall fall beneath thine Iron Rod,
 " As Potters dash their Earthen Work.
- 8 Now ye that sit on Earthly Thrones
 Be wise, and serve the Lord, the Lamb ;
 Now to his Feet submit your Crowns,
 Rejoice and tremble at his Name.
- 9 With humble Love, Go, kiss the Son,
 Lest he grow angry and ye die :
 His Wrath will burn to Worlds unknown
 If ye provoke his Jealousy.
- 10 His Storms shall drive you quick to Hell,
 He is a God, and ye but Dust,
 Happy the Souls that know him well,
 And make his Grace their only Trust.

V. Submission to afflictive Providences,
Job 1. 21.

- 1 **N**Aked as from the Earth we came
 And crept to Life at first,

We

22

Hymns and

B. L

- "Mortals, behold the Sacred Seat
"Of your descending King.
- 4 "The God of Glory down to Men
"Removes his blest Abode,
"Men the dear Objects of his Grace,
"And he the loving God.
- 5 "His own soft Hand shall wipe the Tears
"From every weeping Eye, (Fears,
"And Pains, and Groans, and Griefs, and
"And Death it self shall Dye.
- 6 How Long, dear Saviour, oh how Long
Shall this bright Hour delay?
How swifter round ye Wheels of Time,
And bring the welcome day.

XXII. *The Saints Security and Moderated Afflictions, Psalm 125.*

- 1 **U**Nshaken as the Sacred Hill,
And firm as Mountains be,
Firm as a Rock the Soul shall rest
That leans, O Lord, on thee.
- 2 As tow'ring Hills stood Guardians round
Jerusalem of old,
A mighty Wall of stronger Love
Does every Saint enfold.
- 3 While Tyrants are a smarting Scourge
To drive them near to God,
Divine Compassion does allay
The Fury of the Rod.

+ Deal

L

Spiritual Songs.

23

Deal gently Lord, with Souls sincere,
And lead them safely on
To the bright Gates of Paradise,
Where their Forerunner's gone.

But those that trace the crooked Paths
That the old Serpent drew,
The Bolts that drove him quick to Hell,
Shall dash them downward too.

XXIII. *The Same.*

- 1 **F**irm and unmov'd are they
That lean their Souls on God,
Firm as the Mount where Glorious Grace
Had chosen its Abode.
- 2 Just as the Mountains Guard
Old Salem's Sacred Ground,
So Omnipresence in its Arms
Circles its Saints around.
- 3 What tho the Father's Rod
Drops a Chastising stroke,
Yet lest it wound their Souls too deep,
Its Fury shall be broke.
- 4 Deal gently Lord, with those
Whose Faith and Pious Fear,
Whose Hope and Love and every Grace
Proclaim their Hearts sincere.
- 5 But such as turn aside,
And tread their crooked Ways,
Plagues and swift Ruine shall pursue,
While *Israel* dwells in Peace.

XXIV. The

34

Hymns and

B. I.

- 4 There shall the Lord revive our Hearts
With Rays of quickning Grace,
The Lord that stretcht the Heavens abroad,
And rules the swelling Seas.

XXXV. The Churches Increase and Prosperity; Psalm 67.

- 1 SHine Mighty God, on *Britain* shine
With beams of healing Grace,
Our waiting Eyes would fain behold
Thy reconciled Face.
- 2 High in the midst of all the Isle
Do thou the Glory stand,
And like a Wall of blazing Fire
Surround the naked Land.
- 3 Then shall thy Name from Shore to Shore
Fly all the Earth abroad,
And the Wild Nations shall adore
The Ever-loving God.
- 4 Sing to the Lord ye spacious Lands
With loud Eternal Noise,
Let every Tongue exalt his Praise
And every Heart rejoyce.
- 'Tis He, 'tis Everlasting He
That sits enthron'd above,
His Wisdom rules inferiour things
By Justice and by Love.
- 6 Earth, thou shalt hear thy Maker's Will,
And yield a full Encrease,

Our

B. I.

Spiritual Songs.

35

- Our God will crown his chosen Hill
With Fruitfulness and Peace.
- 7 God the Redeemer scatters round
His choicest Favours here,
While the Creations utmost Bound
Shall see, adore and fear.

XXXVI. The Prosperity of Sinners Cur'd; Psalm 73. 22, 3, 6, 17, 18, 20.

- 1 LOrd, what a thoughtless Wretch was I
To mourn and murmur and complain,
To see the Wicked plac'd on high,
And Pride surround 'em like a Chain.
- 2 But O their End! their dreadful End!
Thy Sanctuary taught me so:
On slippery Rocks I see them stand,
And fiery Billows rowl below.
- 3 Now let 'em boast how tall they rise,
I'll never envy them again,
There they may stand with haughty Eyes,
Till they plunge deep in endless Pain.
- 4 Their fancy'd Joys, how fast they flee?
Just like a Dream when one awakes,
Their Songs of softest Harmony
Are but a Preface to their Plagues.
- 5 Now I esteem their Mirth and Wine,
Too dear to purchase with my Blood,
Lord, 'tis enough that thou art mine,
My Life, my Portion, and my God.

XXXVII. The

36

Hymns and

B. I

XXXVII. *The Frailty and Shortness of Life* ; Psalm 90. ver 5, 10, 12.

- 1 **L**ord, what a feeble Piece
Is this our Mortal Frame ?
Our Life how poor a Trifle 'tis,
That scarce deserves the Name !
- 2 **A**las, the brittle Clay
That built our Body first !
And ev'ry Month and ev'ry Day
'Tis crumbling back to Dust.
- 3 **O**ur Moments fly apace,
Nor will our Minutes stay,
Just like a Flood our hasty Days
Are sweeping us away.
- 4 **W**ell, if our Days must fly
We'll number them aright,
We'll spend them all in Wildoms Way,
And let them take their Flight.
- 5 **T**hey'll waft us sooner o're
This Lifes tempestuous Sea,
Soon we shall reach the peaceful Shore
Of blest Eternity.

XXXVIII. *The Beauty of Publick Worship : or, Delight in Ordinances* ; Psalm 84. 1, 10, &c.

- 1 **Y**E Saints, how lovely is the Place
Where our dear Lord resorts ?

'Tis

I.

Spiritual Songs.

37

'Tis Heaven to see his smiling Face
Tho' in his Earthly Courts.

There the great Monarch of the Skys
His Royal Love displays,
And Light Divine salutes our Eyes
With kind and gentle Rays.

With healing Wings the Heavenly Dove
Hovers hov'ring o're the Place,
Whilst Christ unlocks his Stores of Love,
And sheds abroad his Grace.

There, Mighty God, thy Words declare
The Secrets of thy Will,
There do we pray, and praise thee there,
Be thou amongst us still.

One Look of Mercy from thine Eyes,
Or Whisper of thy Voice,
Exceeds a whole Eternity
Employ'd in carnal Joys.

Lord, I would keep thy Temple Gate
While Jesus is within,
Rather than fill the dazzling Seat
Of Majesty and Sin.

Could I command the spacious Land,
And the more boundless Sea,
For one dear Hour at thy Right Hand,
I'de give them both away.

XXXIX.

While we beneath thy shelt'ring Wings
Thy Just Revenge adore.

XLIII. Praise to the Lord from all Nations ; Psalm 100.

- 1 Sing to the Lord with joyful Voice,
Let every Land his Name adore,
The *British-Iles* shall send the Noise
Across the Ocean to the Shore.
- 2 With Gladness bow before his Throne,
And let his Presence raise your Joys,
Know that the Lord is God alone,
And form'd our Souls, and fram'd our Voice.
- 3 Infinite Power without our Aid,
Figur'd our Clay to humane Mould,
And when our wandring Feet had stray'd,
He brought us to his Sacred Fold.
- 4 Enter his Gates with thankful Songs,
Thro' his wide Courts your Voices raise,
Almighty God, our Joyful Tongues
Shall fill thine House with sounding Praise.
- 5 Wide as the World is thy Command,
Vast as Eternity thy Love,
Firm as a Rock thy Truth must stand,
When rolling Years shall cease to move.

XLIV. Bro-

XLIV. Brotherly Love ; Psal. 133.

- 1 **L**O, what an entertaining Sight
Are Brethren that agree,
Brethren whose cheerful Hearts unite
In Bands of Piety.
- 2 When streams of Love from Christ the
Descend to every Soul, (Spring
And Heav'nly Peace with balmy Wing
Shades and bedews the whole :
- 3 'Tis like the Oil descending sweet,
On *Aaron's* Reverend Head,
And gently flowing to his Feet
Thro' all his Garments spread.
- 4 'Tis pleasant as the Morning Dews
That fall on *Sion's* Hill,
Where God his mildest Glory shews,
And makes his Grace distil.

**XLV. The Last Judgment ; Rev.
21. 5, 6, 7 8---**

- 1 **S**EE where the Great Incarnate God
Fills a Majestick Throne,
While from the Skies his awful Voice
Bears the Last Judgment down.
- 2 I am the First, and I the Last,
Through endless Years the same :
- 1 *AM* is my Memorial still, •
And my Eternal Name.

3 Such

3 Such Favours as a God can give
My Royal Grace bestows,
Ye thirsty Souls, come tast the Streams
Where Life and Pleasure flows.

4 The Saint that triumphs o're his Sins,
I'll own him for a Son,
The whole Creation shall reward
The Conquests he has won.

5 But bloody Hands, and Hearts unclean,
And all the lying Race,
The Faithless, and the Scoffing Crew,
That spurn at offer'd Grace;

6 They shall be taken from my Sight,
Bound fast in Iron Chains,
And headlong plung'd into the Lake
Where Fire and Darkness reigns.

XLVI. Universal Praise to God—
Psalm 148.

1 **L**oud *Hallelujahs* to the Lord
From the wide Round where Crea-
(tures dwell:
Let Heaven begin the Solemn Word,
And sound it dreadful down to Hell.

2 The Lord! how absolute He reigns!
Let every Angel bend the Knee;
Sing of his Love in Heavenly Strains,
And speak how fierce his Terrors be.

3 High on a Throne his Glories dwell,
An awful Throne of shining Bliss:

Fly

B. I. Spiritual Songs. 45

Fly thro' the World, O Sun, and tell
How dazzling bright thy Maker is.

4 Arise ye Tempests, and his Fame
Round the blew Skies Circumference bear;
And the sweet Whisper of his Name
Fill every gentler Breeze of Air.

5 Let Clouds, and Winds, and Waves agree,
To mix their Praises with the Fire,
And the firm Earth and rolling Sea
In this Eternal Song conspire.

6 Ye Flowry Plains proclaim his Skill;
Valleys, lye low before his Eye;
And let his Praise from ev'ry Hill
Rise tuneful to the Neighbouring Sky.

7 Ye stubborn Oaks, and stately Pines,
Bend your tall Branches and adore:
Praise him ye Beasts in different strains,
Both you that Bleat, and you that Roar.

8 Birds, ye must make his Praise your
(Theme,
For he expects a Tune from you?
While the dumb Fish that cut the Stream,
Leap up and mean his Praises too.

9 Mortals can you refrain your Tongue,
When Nature all around you sings?
O for a Shout from Old and Young,
From humble Swains and lofty Kings!

10 Wide as his vast Dominion lies,
Make the Creator's Name be known,
Loud as his Thunder shout his Praise,
And sound it lofty as his Throne.

11 *Jehovah!*

- 11 *Jehovah!* 'tis a glorious Word,
O may it dwell on every Tongue!
But Saints who best have known the Lord
Are bound to raise the noblest Song.
- 12 Speak of the Wonders of that Love
Which *Gabriel* plays on every Chord:
From all Below and all Above,
Loud *Hallelujahs* to the Lord.

XLVII. *Doubts and Fears suppress ;
or, God is our Defence ; Psalm 3.*

- 1 **L**ook gracious God, how numerous they,
Whose envious Power and Rage,
Conspiring my Eternal Death,
Against my Soul engage.
- 2 The lying Tempter would persuade,
There's no Relief in Heaven,
And all my swelling Sins appear
Too big to be forgiven.
- But God, my Glory and my Strength,
Shall tread the Tempter down,
And drown my Sins beneath the Blood
Of his dear dying Son.
- 4 I cry'd, and from his sacred Hill
He bow'd a listning Ear,
I call'd my Father and my God,
And he dispers'd my Fear.
- 5 He threw soft Slumbers on mine Eyes
In sight of all my Foes ;

I woke, and wondred at the Grace
That guarded my Repose.

What tho' the Hosts of Death and Hell
All arm'd against me stood,
Terrors no more shall shake my Soul,
Nor Tremblings chill my Blood.

Lord, I adore thy wondrous Love,
And thy Salvation sing :
My God hath broke the Serpents Teeth,
And Death has lost his Sting.

Salvation to the Lord belongs,
'Tis he alone can save :
Blessings attend thy People here,
And reach beyond the Grave.

XLVIII. *The Christian Race ; Isa.
40. 28, 29, 30, 31.*

A Wake our Souls, away our Fears,
Let every trembling Thought be gone,
Awake and run the heavenly Race,
And put a cheerful Courage on.

True, 'tis a straight and thorny Road,
And mortal Spirits tire and faint,
But they forget the Mighty God
That feeds the Strength of every Saint.

Thee, mighty God, whose matchless Pow'r
Is ever new and ever young,
And firm endures, while endless Years
Their Everlasting Circles run.

These fourteen experiments in the Evangelical Psalm illustrate a good many of the things Watts wished to have done to the traditional metrical psalms when he wrote his Short Essay toward the Improvement of Psalmody (chapter 5, above).

For example, Psalm 67 (Hymn XXXV) is a specimen of a 'naturalized' psalm:

Shine Mighty God, on Britain shine
With beams of healing Grace,
Our waiting Eyes would fain behold
Thy reconciled Face. (v.1)

Cf. also Psalm C (Hymn XLIII)

Psalm 2 (Hymn IV) shows us how he proposes to 'Christianise' the Psalms:

Now ye that sit on Earthly Thrones
Be wise, and serve the Lord, the Lamb;
Now to his Feet submit your Crowns,
Rejoice and tremble at his Name. (v.8)

Psalm 125 (Hymn XXIII) offers an example of the way in which he proposes to adapt the Psalms to the peculiar worship of the Church:

Firm and unmov'd are they
That lean their Souls on God,
Firm as the Mount where Glorious Grace
Had chosen its Abode.

Just as the Mountains Guard
Old Salem's Sacred Ground,
Omnipresence in its Arms
Circles its Saints around. (vv.1,2)

See also Psalm 134 (Hymn XXXIV) in which both methods are united:

Ye that obey th'Immortal King
Attend his holy Place,
Bow to the Glorys (sic) of his Power,
And sing his wondrous Grace.

Lift/

Lift to the Heav'ns your spotless Hands,
 And raise your Souls on high,
 Let warm Devotion wing your Thoughts
 Above the starry Sky.

There may our happy Minds converse
 With our Eternal God,
 And tast (sic) the Joys our Saviour brought
 With his dear dying Blood.

There shall the Lord revive our Hearts
 With Rays of quickning Grace,
 The Lord that stretcht the Heavens abroad,
 And rules the swelling Seas.

That is perhaps the most successful of this early group of imitations judged both from the angle of content and technique. The apparent lack of rhyme in the last verse is due to our pronouncing 'Seas' as 'sees': in Watts' day it was pronounced 'says'- making a faulty rhyme with Grace, it is true, but better than no rhyme at all.

Psalm 3 (Hymn XLVII) shows Watts spiritualising the personal enemies mentioned by the Psalmist:

The lying Tempter would persuade,
 There's no Relief in Heaven,
 And all my swelling Sins appear
 Too big to be forgiven. (v.2)

What tho' the Hosts of Death and Hell
 All arm'd against me stood,
 Terrors no more shall shake my Soul,
 Nor Tremblings chill my Blood. (v.6)

Finally, to illustrate the development of Watts' evangelical psalmody and his attempt to arrive at greater technical mastery in his management of it, we shall trace the history of one of these early Christian psalms from 1705 to 1719. It is his version of Psalm 100 which first appeared, as we have seen, in Horae Lyricae, 1705/

1705, was transferred to Hymns and Spiritual Songs, 1707, and ultimately, much altered, found a place in The Psalms of David Imitated, 1719. This psalm appeared in Horae as follows:

Praise to the Lord

From

All Nations.

Psalm C.

I.

Sing to the Lord with Joyful Voice,
Let every Land his Name adore,
The British Isles shall send the Noise
Across the Ocean to the Shore.

II.

With gladness bow before his Throne.
And let his Presence raise your Joys,
Know that the Lord is God alone,
And form'd our Souls, and fram'd our Voice.

III.

Infinite Power without our aid,
Figur'd our Clay to humane Mould;
And when our Wandring Feet had stray'd
He brought us to his Sacred Fold.

IV.

Enter his Gates with Thankful Songs,
Thro' his Wide Courts your Voices raise;
Almighty God, our Joyful Tongues
Shall fill thine house with sounding Praise.

V.

Wide as the World is thy Command,
Vast as Eternity thy Love,
Firm as the Rock thy Truth must stand
When rolling Years shall cease to move.

This/

This Psalm Imitation next appeared in the first edition of Hymns and Spiritual Songs, Book 1, hymn XLIII, with the same title and with no material change in the text. Its final appearance in The Psalms of David Imitated..., as the Second Metre version of Psalm C, is as follows:

Psalm C. Second Metre, a Paraphrase.

i.

Sing to the Lord with Joyful Voice;
 Let every Land his Name adore;
 The British Isles shall send the Noise
 A-cross the Ocean to the Shore.

ii.

Nations, attend before his Throne
 With solemn Fear, with sacred Joy;
 Know that the Lord is God alone;
 He can create, and he destroy.

iii.

His sovereign Power without our Aid
 Made us of Clay, and form'd us Men:
 And when like wandring Sheep we stray'd,
 He brought us to his Fold again.

iv.

We are his people, we his Care,
 Our Souls and all our mortal Frame:
 What lasting Honours shall we rear
 Almighty Maker, to thy Name?

v.

Wee'll (sic) croud (sic) thy Gates with thankfull Songs,
 High as the Heavens our Voices raise;
 And Earth with her ten thousand Tongues
 Shall fill thy Courts with sounding Praise.

vi/

vi.

Wide as the World is thy Command,
 Vast as Eternity thy Love;
 Firm as the Rock thy Truth must stand
 When rolling Years shall cease to move.

Comparing the 1705 rendering with this recension of 1719, we notice that, whereas the opening and closing verses remain unchanged, considerable alterations have been made in verses two and three, and a new verse, "We are his people, we his Care", (v.4, 1719) has been added. The Psalm in its 1705 form is no mean literary effort, but it is marred sometimes by weaknesses in language, rhythm and structure. In its attempt to recreate the dignity of Kethe's version, it is too heavy in places, moves only with difficulty, and lacks the solemn stateliness of its original. The recension (1719) shows that Watts had made considerable progress in the mastery of his craft. The experience of writing hymns for a particular congregation had assisted him in this regard. The Psalm is now more of a unity, the rhymes are better managed, the individual stanzas more compact, the language less self-conscious and literary, the rhythm smoother, and the whole composition simpler and more stately.

In the preface to The Psalms of David Imitated, Watts acknowledged his indebtedness to Dr. John Patrick; and it is interesting to notice that in this rendering of Psalm 100, no less than three lines can be traced to their originals in Patrick's version:³

Watts:/

Watts: Know that the Lord is God alone
 Patrick: Know that the Lord is God alone

Watts: We are his people, we his Care
 Patrick: We are the people of his Care

Watts: We'll croud thy Gates with thankfull Songs
 Patrick: Enter his Gates with thankfull hearts.

Of these lines two were in Watts' early 1705 text; so that it seems from the beginning of his work on the Christianised Psalm, Watts had put Dr. Patrick's version before him as something of a pattern for psalm-versions intended for use in the Christian Church by ordinary people.

II.

Isaac Watts' finished work on the Psalter appeared in 1719 as The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament, and Applied to the Christian State and Worship. It is, as we are accustomed to notice in Watts' work, accompanied by a Preface - one of the truly great and epoch-making prefaces in English literature - a typical prologus galeatus, armed against the slings and arrows of adversaries whom it would soon provoke to hostility.

The preface is based, as we have remarked, on the first half of A Short Essay toward the Improvement of Psalmody, and many of the ideas in the earlier writing are found again here. The preface particularises more, and is valuable to the student of the early history of the modern English hymn for its references to Watts' forerunners/

forerunners in psalmody from whom he derived assistance in his own reform. Readers will find the full text of the preface in the Appendix to the thesis, p. 55. Here we will summarise the points Watts raises in this historic tract.

The Psalms, he says, contain the noblest sentiments of piety, and yet our metrical translations fail to keep alive the spirit of devotion in the modern worshipper. The reason is not far to seek. The Psalms were David's own peculiar response to God, and reflect his character, circumstances, concerns and religion. They cannot be expected to affect us as they did David. Our circumstances are different, and we belong to a different religion, and so our spiritual songs should fit close to our circumstances, and spring from our experience (p.iii).

Watts' aim is to introduce reality and emotional warmth into this part of divine worship for the whole church. He is a Catholic in praise (p.IV).

He informs the reader of the purpose of his book. It is not another translation of the Psalms of David. In it he has a different design from all his predecessors in Psalmody (p.IV).

He proposes, therefore, to do three things:

1. To review the work of his predecessors.
2. To show how they failed to produce suitable Christian praise.
3. To describe his own unique course, and mention some of the reasons which induced him to take it (p.V)

1. His Predecessors in Psalmody: Watts has seen over twenty versions of the Psalter, and all of them only make David speak English./

English. They retain practically all his other circumstances and characteristics, although these are sometimes alien to Gospel times. There are, however, he thinks, a few Psalms that may be translated literally into English and used in the Psalmody of the Church for all times. But the greater number of the psalms have something Hebraic, dated and difficult in them. There have been writers like Milbourne and Darby who have given now and again, an evangelic turn to the Hebrew sense. But Dr. Patrick has gone even further in this respect, having made use in several psalms of the present language of Christians, and left out many of the Judaisms. This fact, Watts thinks, accounts for the favour of Patrick's version in many religious Assemblies.⁴ He has thus led Nonconformist congregations insensibly to sing that which is really not a translation at all, but a paraphrase. There are scarcely any who have departed farther from the text of the Hebrew Psalter to suit their thoughts to the state and worship of Christianity than Patrick. And this is his peculiar excellence in the few psalms in which he has practised it. What Patrick has done in part, Watts proposes to do in almost every psalm, and to excel him in the art of versification, p.V.

2. But, Watts continues, even in these few psalms in which Patrick has applied this method, he has been so much bound to custom that they still reflect some of the circumstances of David in an even stronger light than the original Hebrew songs. So that it is hard/

hard to find in any of Patrick's versions six or eight verses which might be sung with profit by a modern congregation (p.VI). In our present worship where 'lining-out' is common, we are bound to sing every verse, unless the clerk or precentor adopts a selective principle, and confines the singing to a monotonous repetition of a few psalms. Moreover, the Psalter fails to provide suitable praise for the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. David therefore longs for the aid of a Christian hymnist (pp.VII-VIII).

Pp.VIII-XVI are largely a repetition of what he had already said about the inadequacy of the traditional psalmody in Christian worship in the Short Essay (Cf.chapt.5, above).

3. On pp.XVI-XVII Watts proceeds to explain his own design: to accommodate the Book of Psalms to Christian Worship. This he proposes to do by the following methods:-

- (a) By using the principle of selection which has always been operative in the performance of traditional psalmody.
- (b) By turning the Psalmist's invective against personal enemies into spiritual adversaries.⁵
- (c) By 'democratizing' worship-song; toning down some of the Psalmist's sublimity, and altering his peculiar circumstances to general ones which are common among present-day worshippers.
- (d) By interpreting the psalms wherever necessary in the light of the Gospel. Wherever the Psalmist describes religion merely as the Fear of God, Watts adds the New Testament conceptions of Faith and Love. And where the Old Testament poet speaks only of pardon by the mercy of God, he adds the merits of a Saviour. And in place of reference to the old Sacrificial System/

System he substitutes the Atonement of the Cross. Lastly, he changes, in the interest of experience, the material blessings promised to the Saints of the Psalms into the spiritual blessings of the Gospel; Grace, Glory, and Life Eternal.

- (e) To these should be added Watts' method of 'naturalising' the Hebrew Psalms, i.e., making them British, referred to in chapter 5 above.

PP.XVIII-XXII are largely a repetition of his arguments with imaginary objectors in the Short Essay, with one important exception. On p.XX he develops a thought hinted at earlier on, namely, that the psalms needed to be made Christian because of their ethical unreality. We are commanded by Christ not to curse our enemies, but to love them. And joy, not mourning, should be the note of Christian psalmody.

The remaining material on pp.XXIII-IX appears for the first time in this preface, and concerns the technical side of his work, and its relation to the actual performance of psalmody. Three matters are discussed: the division, versification, metre and rhyme of the psalms.

1. The Division of the Psalms: He points out that the Hebrew Psalms are often heterogeneous in matter. But each hymn for Christian worship is better with one distinct idea wedded to simplicity of form and clarity of expression. In Watts' handling of the Psalms we see his logical mind at work. He perceives, as Montgomery says, that good congregational hymns should have a beginning, middle and end. He is a master craftsman in the architecture of the English hymn. Besides, in his criticism of the

diversity and diffuseness of thought and feeling within individual Psalms, he points to the need for system in the praise of the Church, each hymn serving one distinct purpose. One thing at a time in worship is the ideal. And so to avoid muddle, he resorts to a division of the Psalms.

But this division of the Psalms is motivated also by his desire to have hymns of singable length. To achieve this he has had to transpose and sometimes to omit verses of the original. But in doing so he is not an innovator: he is only doing in a systematic way, and in the text of the Psalms themselves, what the clerk often does guided by nothing more substantial than caprice.

2. Versification. He thinks that Denham's version is the best poetical rendering of the Psalms in the orthodox manner.⁶ But he wishes Denham had taken greater liberty with the text. Because he refuses the freedom of paraphrasing, his sense is often cramped, and would be difficult to follow even by a devotee of Davidic Judaism, let alone by a plain Christian worshipper of today. Denham, Watts tells us, was aware of this defect in his version and says so himself in the preface to his Psalms.

Watts has a word of praise as well for the poetical parts of the versions by Milbourne and Tate and Brady. But these he criticizes on the ground that they are not suitable for ordinary worshippers. Worship reform requires to be democratic.

He admits borrowing lines from all these authors, but chiefly from/

from Patrick whose design is more in rapprochement with his own, if Patrick's verse is often inferior to theirs.

In the use of Language, Watts has sometimes adopted the sublime style, but never at the sacrifice of clarity. He has avoided the language of the poets when it did not suit the plainer language of the Gospel. Watts, as we have said (chapter 1 above) came under the influence of the language ideals of the Royal Society, through the works of John Wilkins. Watts' view of what constituted the right language for psalmody may be seen in certain passages from A Guide to Prayer, 1715, which we have placed for reference in the Appendix, p. 40. He keeps in mind the intellectual capacity of the average eighteenth century congregation, and strikes the mean between high-flown poetry and pedestrian verse. He avoids all merely decorative metaphor, and hard words, that the most ignorant worshipper may not be tempted "to sing without his understanding".

It was fortunate for English hymnody in its formative period that Watts' attitude to language was mainly Augustan - but without the Augustan obsession for a poetic diction. By the time he published his Psalms Watts had little place for the verbal "barbarities" of eastern nations and the "antique ages". Even if these were permissible in public song, he says, they could not be fittingly introduced within the narrow compass and economy of the accepted metres of English psalmody.

3. Metre, Rhyme, etc., Pioneer and versatile metrist though he was,⁷ Watts limits himself in the use of metre to the common capacity/

capacity of the congregation and its traditions in this respect. He writes in the three accepted metres of the Psalm tunes, but in his rarer use of longer stanzas and refrains he foreshadows the practice of later hymnists (cf. chapter 6, below).

He will not follow Baxter in the artificial device of bracketing a word in the line, so that the same Psalm may be sung alternately in two metres (cf. chapter 3 above). He writes the same psalm anew, introducing in it another interpretation of David's meaning. It is this variety of interpretation that makes Watts' Imitation one of the best commentaries of the Book of Psalms, at least of a devotional sort.

If in one metre he gives a "loose" to his evangelical meaning, in the other he confines himself more closely to the text.

He excuses himself for the paucity of his rhymes, which, he thinks, is unavoidable in a divine theme where one must exercise extraordinary discretion, and where one is confined to a number of recurring words. But he claims, rightly too, to have been more successful in this regard than Dr. Patrick and Tate and Brady.

In the final paragraphs Watts, like Milton, says that no man of ordinary mould can be a true poet, least of all if he would try to translate the Psalms of David into English verse. Recalling the Epistle to the Galatians, he writes that the brightest genius on Earth "or an Angel from Heaven" could not reach the incomparable sense and style of David. But he disclaims the rank of poet. The aim/

aim of his work is to assist the worship of lowly Christian congregations, and he does not regard it in any sense as being binding or final. Each age demands its own worship-song. At the same time, he is proud of his handiwork. It combines qualities rarely found together, and it is the fruit of many years of arduous toil. He thanks God for His assistance in it, and commends it to His service through the praise of the churches.

There the preface proper ends. But it is followed by an Advertisement to the Reader (pp.XXIX-XXXII), which is one of the few sections in Watts' hymnological writings that deals exclusively with the performance of psalmody. In it he deals with such questions as the choosing and finding of Psalms, of the manner of singing, and the choice of tunes. A facsimile of this section will be found in the Appendix, p. 69.

III.

The most striking feature of Watts' Imitation is its metrical variety (cf. Appendix, pp. 105-127). His version in this regard alone is in contrast with those of his predecessors. Sternhold and Hopkins had only 154 versions of the 150 Psalms, and of these 131 were in Common Metre, and only four Psalms were translated in two metres. There was even less variety of metre in Tate and Brady. It offers one rendering only of each of the Psalms. Watts, on the other hand, has 338 versions: 164 in Common Metre, 34 in/

in Short Metre, 121 in Long Metre, 8 in 6.8's, 4 in 6.10's, 3 in 668.668, and 4 in 6666.4444. Thirteen paraphrases are presented in all three traditional metres, and close on 50 in two of them. Quite a number of Psalms, or portions of Psalms are presented in four, five and even six metrical renderings. The metrical variety of Watts' version marks an advance on the Psalmody of his predecessors, and constitutes a considerable part of his claim to greatness and originality as a psalmodic reformer. This is seen more clearly when we recall that the Versions mentioned above were composite productions, whilst his was a lone venture.

Another impressive feature of Watts' Psalmody is its inclusiveness so far as the text of the Psalter is concerned. Of the 2,461 verses in the Book of Psalms he includes no fewer than 2,050. The 411 verses omitted represent 12 entire Psalms (126 verses) and 285 verses of others. The reason for his omission of three of these Psalms is given in footnotes: in each case their sense has been incorporated in other Psalms. No specific reason is offered for his omission of the remaining nine Psalms; but it would appear that these were marked by historical associations or moral perverseness that were not amenable to Christian treatment in the methods outlined in the preface.

The only entire Psalm that follows the literal method of metrical translation is the L.M. version of Psalm 100 which Watts himself calls "a Plain Translation". Perhaps Psalm 8 (1st part) may also be/

be included in this category. Although there are some parts of Psalms which are translated fairly literally, the version as a whole is transmuted by a Christianizing or naturalising purpose. In many cases, Watts honest workman as he is, particularises on the methods mentioned in the preface by adding footnotes to Psalms in which these methods are illustrated. There are about 110 of these notes in the actual text of his version.

Of these, we quote the prefatory note to Psalm 119, as it almost completely illustrates his treatment of the Psalter as a whole, as well as his artistry and ingenuity:

"I have collected and disposed the most usefull Verses of this Psalm under eighteen different Heads, and form'd a Divine Song upon each of them. But the Verses are much transposed to attain some degree of Connexion. In some places among the Words, Law, Commands, Judgments, Testimonies, I have used Gospel, Word, Grace, Truth, Promises, etc., as more agreeable to the New Testament, and the Common Language of Christians, and equally answers the Design of the Psalmist, which was to recommend the Holy Scripture.(1st ed., p.312).

Watts' transposition of verses in this long and disjointed Psalm, and his creative handling of the verses thus transposed, not only illustrates his method in most of the "imitations" but offers an example of the gradual emergence of the Hymn from the matrix of the metrical Psalm. The final stage in this maieutic process is seen in the eighth part of this Psalm, The Word of God is the Saints Portion; or, The Excellency and Variety of Scripture, which pretends to be a paraphrase of v.3, but is more truly a freely-composed hymn:

I

Lord, I have made thy Word my Choice,
 My lasting Heritage:
 There shall my noblest Powers rejoice,
 My warmest Thoughts engage.

II

I'll read the Histories of thy Love,
 And keep thy Laws in Sight,
 While thro' the Promises I rove
 With ever-fresh Delight.

III

'Tis a broad Land of Wealth unknown,
 Where Springs of Life arise,
 Seeds of immortal Bliss are sown,
 And hidden Glory lies.

IV

The best Relief that Mourners have,
 It makes our Sorrows blest;
 Our fairest Hope beyond the Grave,
 And our eternal Rest.

Incidentally, it would seem that many of the hymns in Hymns and Spiritual Songs , Book 1, originated as versified homilies on some biblical text or texts. That Watts used this method later is seen in three groups of Sermonic Hymns (cf. Appendix, p. 128).

An examination of the subject matter and content of Watts' Psalms shows, that as he did not regard the Hebrew Psalter in its entirety as a book suitable for public worship even in Temple and Synagogue, so he did not intend his imitation of it solely as a Christian Psalm-Book for Church worship. Many of his paraphrases indicate by their titles that they were written for private or family meditation: cf. Psalm 6/

Psalm 6, both versions; Psalm 39, 3rd part; Psalm 42, 1st part; Psalm 84, last version; Psalm 119, 2nd Part; Psalm 116, 1st Part; Psalm 120; Psalm 133, Short Metre. There are Psalms for Magistrates (cf. 101 L.M.), for a Glutton and Drunkard (107, 3rd part), for the Master of a Family (101 C.M.), for Seamen and Mariners, (107, 4th and 5th parts), and for the Husbandman (65, 3rd part). In this sense Watts appreciated better than his predecessors had done the extra-liturgical purpose of much of the Psalter.

Perhaps Watts followed occasionally the guidance of the Psalm Titles in the Breviary Psalters in their Christological interpretation of the Hebrew Psalms.

Before the Reformation - when the literal interpretation of the Psalms only was sanctioned, apart from those accepted as Messianic - a mystical or allegorical method of interpreting the Hebrew Psalter had been very popular. This method perceived a higher symbolic significance underlying the text. It is not entirely lacking in the New Testament.⁸ In the monasteries during the Middle Ages the psalms were recited very slowly and deliberately, with long pauses at the colon and at the end of each verse. This enabled the monks to give the text such allegorical meaning as was appropriate to the feast or ecclesiastical season then being observed. Doubtless the devotional value of the Psalms was thus greatly enhanced, but often the exegesis was forced and unreal, as may be seen from the titles of the Psalms in the Sarum Psalter.

Apart/

Apart from the traditionally accepted Messianic Psalms, which are given their appropriate designation, almost all the remaining Psalms are 'catholicized' - adapted to the ethos of Roman Catholic worship and piety. They are propagandist in the worst sense. For example, they adopt the imprecatory element in the Hebrew Psalms for an attack on Jews and Heretics. The text of the Psalms was not tampered with, but the interpretation was prefixed to each Psalm in the form of a rubric. For instance, Psalm 1 has "Related to the person of Christ: for He is perfect who hath never erred in the way of sinners"; Psalm 25, "The Voice of the Church, to which just men and all Catholics adhere, for they trust in the Lord"; Psalm 28, "The Voice of Martyrs blessing the Lord"; Psalm 48, "The Voice of the Priests to the people for the Faith of the Church", and so on. The point we wish to make is this, in the Mediaeval Church some attempt had been made, however clumsily and artificially, to accommodate the Hebrew Psalter to Christian worship and private devotion, by setting it in an evangelical-cum-ecclesiastical framework. Calvin's rigid bibliolatry and literalism, which gave birth to the metrical Psalmody of the Reformed Church in Europe and America, too ruthlessly sacrificed this evangelical treatment of the Hebrew Psalter, and introduced as a result a paralysing dichotomy into the worship of the Church. Liturgically speaking, the Church was a house divided against itself, praying and preaching from the Gospel, but singing its praises from the Psalm Book of the Old/

Old Dispensation.

Watts' puritan and logical mind rejected many of the Breviary Psalter rubrics as far-fetched or superstitious, but some few of them, along with the evangelical headings to the Psalms in some editions of the Authorised Version of the Bible, might have guided him in his own Imitation of the Psalter. For example, one of the two Messianic interpretations of Psalm 8, "Almighty Ruler of the Skies" which he calls The Hosanna of the Children..., reflects the Sarum rubric to the same Psalm, which reads Relates to the Ascension of our Lord, and his praise by the infants, who said to Him, Hosanna in the Highest. Similarly, the Sarum rubric to Psalm 15, Speaks of the example and teaching of Christ, might have suggested Watts' two pieces on this theme. Cf. also Sarum rubrics to Pss. 19, 21, 22, 24, 45, 47, 56, 63, 69, 70, 89, 97, 98, 99, 104, 149, 150.

A few of the early editions of the Old Version of the metrical Psalter retained in a modified form some of these mediaeval titles which gave a Christian interpretation to the Psalms. We have seen a late sixteenth century edition of Sternhold and Hopkins' Psalter from the press of Robert Waldegrave (cf. facsimile title-page, 190), which has a rubric for each of the 150 Psalms. Most of them follow the literalistic interpretation of Calvin, but at least 27 have some evangelical or ecclesiastical import, and one or two reflect the mediaeval treatment:-

Psalm 2. Herein is signified Christ and his Kingdome.

Psalm 3. He rejoyceth for the victory given to him and the Church, over their enemies.

Psalm 13/

- Psalm 18 ...wherein is the image of Christ's kingdome, which shall conquer through Christ, by the unspeakable love of God, though all the world resist.
- Psalm 22 Under his person (i.e. David's) Christ is figured.
- Psalm 45 ...here is figured the wonderfull maiestie and increase of Christ's kingdome, and the Church his Spouse, now taken of the Gentiles.
- Psalm 47 Herein is prophecied the kingdome of Christ, in the time of the Gospell.
- Psalm 49 ...(The Psalmist) noteth how all things are ruled by God's providence, who as he judgeth these worldly misers to everlasting torments, so he preserveth his, and will reward them in the day of the resurrection. 1 Thess. 1.
- Psalm 50 He prophecieth that God will call all nations by the Gospell, etc.
- Psalm 52herein is liuely set foorth the kingdome of Antichrist.
- Psalm 69finally, he doth provoke all creatures to praises, prophecyng of the kingdome of Christ and building of Juda, where all the faithfull and their seede shall dwell for ever.
- Psalm 72 God's kingdome by Christ is represented by Solomon, under whom shall be righteousnesse, peace and felicity, unto whom all kings and nations shall doe homage, whose name and power shall endure for ever.
- Psalm 73 &c.(but) the godly enter into life everlasting, etc.
- Psalm 74 A complaint of the destruction of the Church and true Religion under the name of Sion.
- Psalm 75 The faithfull praise the Lord, who shall come to judge at his time, when the wicked shall drinke the cup of his wrath. but the righteous shalbe exalted to honour.
- Psalm 82 God (is) present with Judges and Magistrates, reproveth their Partialitie and unrighteousness and exhorteth them to doe justice, etc.
- Psalm 85/

- Psalm 85 ...they rejoyce in hope of promised deliverance, which was a figure of Christ's kingdome, under which should be perfect felicity.
- Psalm 89 David praiseth God for his covenant betweene him and his elect by Iesus Christ.....etc.
- Psalm 91 (God promises) to those that love him, know him, and trust in him, to deliver them, and give them immortal glory.
- Psalm 95 An earnest exhortation to praise God for the government of the world and election of his Church, etc.
- Psalm 96 An exhortation to the Iewes and Gentiles to praise God for his mercie: and this specially ought to be referred to the kingdome of Christ....etc.
- Psalm 97 David exhorteth all to reioyce for the coming of the kingdome of Christ...etc.
- Psalm 98 An earnest exhortation to praise the Lord for his power, mercy and fidelity in his promise by Christ, by whom he hath communicated his salvation to all nations.
- Psalm 100 He exhorteth all men to serve the Lord who hath made us to enter into his courts and assemblies, to praise his name.
- Psalm 109 ...prayeth God to helpe him to destroy his enemies, who represent Judas the traitor unto Iesus Christ, and all the enemies of the children of God.
(cf. Sarum Breviary: "Cursing of Judas, the traitor").
- Psalm 113 An exhortation to praise the Lord for his providence, in that contrary to the course of nature he worketh in his Church.
- Psalm 117 He exhorteth the Gentiles to praise God, because he hath accomplished as well to them, as to the Iewes, the promise of life everlasting by Iesus Christ.
- Psalm 118 ...under (David's) person Christ is liuely set forth, who should be of his people relected.⁹

In his Imitation Watts seems to have adopted the interpretation of 20 of the above 27 rubrics, most of them Messianic. He rejects, it/

Revive at his first dawning Light,
And Deserts blossom at the Sight.

VI.

The Saints shall flourish in his Days,
Drest in the Robes of Joy and Praise;
Peace like a River from his Throne
Shall flow to Nations yet unknown.

PSALM LXXII. *Second Part.*

Christ's Kingdom among the Gentiles.

I.

JESUS shall reign where e'er the Sun
Does his successive Journeys run;
His Kingdom stretch from Shore to Shore,
Till Moons shall wax and wane no more.

II.

[Behold the Islands with their Kings,
And *Europe* her best Tribute brings;
From *North* to *South* the Princes meet
To pay their Homage at his Feet.

III.

There *Persia* glorious to behold,
There *India* shines in *Eastern* Gold;
And barbarous Nations at his Word
Submit and bow and own their Lord.]

IV.

For him shall endless Pray'r be made,
And Praises throng to crown his Head;
His Name like sweet Perfume shall rise
With every Morning Sacrifice.

V.

People and Realms of every Tongue
Dwell on his Love with sweetest Song;
And

And Infant-Voices shall proclaim
Their early Blessings on his Name.

VI.

Blessings abound where e'er he reigns,
The Prisoner leaps to lose his Chains,
The Weary find eternal Rest,
And all the Sons of Want are blest.

VII.

[Where he displays his healing Power,
Death and the Curse are known no more;
In him the Tribes of *Adam* boast
More Blessings than their Father lost.

VIII.

Let every Creature rise and bring,
Peculiar Honours to our King;
Angels descend with Songs again,
And Earth repeat the long *Amen*.]

PSALM LXXIII. *First Part* Com. Metre.
Afflicted Saints happy, and prosperous Sinners
curst.

I.

Now I'm convinc'd, the Lord is kind
To Men of Heart sincere:
Yet once my foolish Thoughts repin'd,
And border'd on Despair.

II.

I griev'd to see the Wicked thrive,
And spoke with angry Breath,
"How pleasant and profane they live!
"How peacefull is their Death!

III.

"With well-fed Flesh and haughty Eyes
"They lay their Fears to sleep;
"Against

WATTS' GREATEST MESSIANIC PSALM,
"Jesus shall reign", as it
appeared in the first edition
of THE PSALMS OF DAVID IMITATED,
1719.

it is interesting to note, the rubric to the 109 Psalm, which reflects mediaeval hostility to the Jews, who epitomise under modern conditions, the ancient treachery of Judas. Watts offers in its place the eirenicon, Love to Enemies from the Example of Christ.

Watts' management of the Messianic Psalms reveals his biblical scholarship. He rejects some psalms which were commonly held to be Messianic, such as Psalms 18, 29, 41 and 46. These he paraphrases in the language of the Christian Church or the saint's chamber. The Psalms which are Messianic and prophetic, such as Pss. 2, 8, 16, 21, 22, 24, 40, 45, 68, 69, 72, 85, 87, 89, 96, 97, 102, 110 and 118, exhibit Watts' genius in the exhaustive treatment of their Gospel significance. For the most part, the themes are handled simply, and artistically. Take, for example, Watts' treatment of Psalm 8. This affords him material for four versions: a plain translation, and three others in which the full messianic interpretation is brought out, Christ's Condescension and Glorification, The Hosanna of the Children, and Adam and Christ. See also his treatment of Psalms 16 and 69. Psalm 72, second L.M. version, "Jesus shall reign", is Watts' finest example of a Messianic Psalm.

In addition to these accepted Messianic Psalms, Christological content is imported into a few others, according to the methods outlined in the preface. Cf. Pss. 4 (L.M.), 12 (C.M.), 35 (2nd C.M.), 47, 51 (2nd C.M.), 71 (2nd C.M.), 99 (S.M. 1st Part). The remainder of/

of the Psalms are infused with Christian morality, or Pauline theology, and set in the ethos and atmosphere of the eighteenth century meeting-house. Although some of Watts' immortal hymns are found in his Imitation, John Ker's criticism of the book as a whole is not without some foundation: he calls it

"a graft of the Apostle Paul on David, which is not very successful, as it becomes a kind of metrical commentary with the old and new in perplexing conjunction, and Britain and Zion claiming attention by turns". (p.203)

Despite Watts' probable indebtedness to Mediaeval and Lutheran methods of interpreting the Psalms in a Christian way, his version as a whole is suffused through and through with the spirit of the Independent Meeting-house, with its almost smug piety and hatred of the 'World', its trials and persecutions, and its solemn joy in the ordinances of worship.¹⁰ There can be little surprise, that with few exceptions, Watts' Imitation did not catch on in Anglican and Presbyterian quarters. It is too suffused with the spirit of fellowship, the shared experience bordering sometimes on morbid introspection, and the personal intimacy of the gathered Church - that relatively small fellowship of people closely bound to one-another in Christ, and standing on a level of spiritual attainment, conviction and ideals. Ideally, he produced his book with the whole Church in mind; but it is really a Christian Psalm Book for the gathered churches of Independency.

IV

We propose now to say something about what we have called elsewhere, the architectonic quality of Watts' work, with respect to his Imitation of the Psalms.

Structural qualities are not immediately manifest in the book as a whole, because Watts follows closely the order of the Hebrew Psalms, and is thus precluded from arranging his paraphrases in groups according to subject or liturgical aim, as in a modern hymnal. At the same time, a glance through the extensive, but by no means exhaustive indices appended to the volume will show that he did envisage fairly fully the liturgical requirements of an eighteenth century Congregational meeting-house, and went a long way towards supplying them. It is not difficult with the help of these indices and the titles of the individual psalms (cf. Appendix, p. 105) to arrange Watts' Psalm-imitations according to their liturgical purpose in systematic form, thus displaying the hidden architectonic of his Psalm-Book for the Christian Church. The titles and first lines of the psalms, whose numbers are alone given in the following tables, will be found in the Appendix, p. 105.

LITURGICAL/

LITURGICAL STRUCTURE OF WATTS' PSALM-BOOK FOR A CHRISTIAN CHURCH, 1719

1.

The Eternal God.i. His Attributes, Worship
and Praise.

Pss. 96 (6 eights); 145 L.M.; 145 1st Pt. C.M.;
 93 L.M.; 93 2nd Metre; 93 3rd Metre; 139 1st Pt. L.M.
 139 1st Pt. C.M.; 66 1st Pt. C.M.; 33 2nd Pt. C.M.;
 33 (6 eights); 113 (6 eights); 113 L.M.; 8 S.M.;
 145 2nd Pt. C.M.; 68 1st Pt. L.M.; 145 3rd Pt. C.M.;
 142 C.M.; 111 2nd Pt. C.M.; 36 C.M.; 36 S.M.; 115 L.M.;
 103 1st Pt. L.M.; 103 1st Pt. S.M.; 103 2nd Pt. S.M.;
 103 2nd Pt. L.M.; 89 1st Pt. C.M.; 146 L.M.;
 146 (6 eights); 135 C.M.; 103 3rd Pt. S.M.; 86 C.M.;
 148 (4 sixes, 4 fours); 148 L.M.; 148 S.M.; 111 1st
 Pt. C.M.; 100 1st and 2nd (L.M.); 33 (1st Pt. 6
 eights); 147 1st Pt. L.M.; 136 L.M.; 148 (8 sixes)

ii. His Creation and
Providence.

Pss. 139 2nd Pt. L.M.; 139 2nd Pt. C.M.; 111 1st
 Pt. C.M.; 33 1st Pt. C.M.; 121 L.M.; 121 C.M.;
 121 (4 sixes, 4 fours); 65 L.M. 2nd Pt; 73 S.M.;
 73 1st Pt. C.M.; 9 2nd Pt. C.M.; 36 L.M.; 68 3rd
 Pt. L.M.; 57 L.M.; 104 L.M.; 78 1st Pt. C.M.;
 147 1st Pt. L.M.:

2.

The Lord Jesus Christi. His first and second
Advent.

Pss. 97 2nd Pt. L.M.; 98 2nd Pt. C.M.;
 Pss. 96 C.M.; 97 C.M.

ii. His Ministry, etc.

iii. His Sufferings and
Death.

Pss. 69 2nd Pt. L.M.; 69 1st Pt. L.M.; 69 1st Pt.
 C.M.; 69 2nd Pt. C.M.; 22 1st Pt. C.M.; 16 2nd Pt. L.M.

iv./

iv. His Resurrection.

Ps. 16 2nd Pt. C.M.

v. His Ascension and Exaltation.

Pss. 2 L.M.; 24 L.M.; 47 C.M.; 68 2nd Pt L.M.;
 8 C.M.; 21 L.M.; 22 2nd Pt. C.M.; 22 L.M.;
 89 4th Pt. C.M.; 99 1st Pt. S.M.

3.

The Holy Spirit.

His Influences and Graces.

- (a) Fear and Hope. Pss. 119 13th Pt. C.M.; 42 1st Pt. C.M.;
77 1st Pt. C.M.; 3 C.M.
- (b) Humility. Ps. 131 C.M.
- (c) Joy. Pss. 18 3rd Pt L.M.
- (d) Knowledge. Pss. 25 2nd Pt. S.M.; 119 9th Pt. C.M.
- (e) Liberality. Pss. 37 2nd Pt. C.M.; 41 L.M.;
112 (six eights); 112 L.M.; 112 C.M.
- (f) Love. Pss. 133 C.M.; 35 2nd Pt C.M.; 109 C.M.
- (g) Prudence and Zeal Ps. 39 1st Pt. C.M.
- (h) Repentence. Ps. 51 2nd Pt. C.M.
- (i) Resignation Ps. 123 C.M.
- (j) Sincerity. Pss. 119 3rd Pt. C.M.; 139 3rd Pt. L.M.
18 2nd Pt. L.M.
- (k) Trust. Ps. 62 L.M.

4.

The Scripture

i. Its Properties.

Pss. 19 L.M.; 19 (six eights); 119 7th Pt. C.M.;
 119 4th Pt. C.M.; 119 5th Pt. C.M.; 119 6th Pt.
 C.M.; 119 8th Pt. C.M.

ii. The Gospel.

Pss. 89 3rd Pt. C.M.; 98 1st Pt. C.M.

iii. Doctrines and Blessings.

- (a) The Covenant of Grace. Pss. 89 1st Pt. L.M.; 89 5th Pt. C.M.
- (b) The Fall of Man and Redemption. Pss. 51 2nd Pt. L.M.; 51 1st Pt. C.M.;
14 1st Pt. C.M.; 8 2nd Pt. L.M.;
Pss. 40 2nd Pt. C.M.; 40 L.M.;
- (c) Justification. Pss. 71 2nd Pt. C.M.;
- (d)/

- (d) Pardon Pss. 130 C.M.; 130 L.M.; 32 S.M.; 32 C.M.;
32 1st Pt. L.M.; 32 2nd Pt. L.M.
- (e) Communion with God. Pss. 23 L.M.; 23 C.M. 23 S.M.; 73 2nd Pt. C.M.;
- (f) Sanctification. Ps. 119 11th Pt. C.M.
- (g) Perseverance. Pss. 125 C.M.; 125 S.M.; 138 L.M.
- (h) Salvation. Pss. 85 2nd Pt. L.M.; 69 3rd Pt. C.M.

5.

The Christian Church, its Life and Worship.

- i. The Settlement of a Church. Pss. 15 C.M.; 15 L.M.; 24 C.M.; 132 C.M.;
132 L.M.; 118 3rd Pt. C.M.
- ii. The Beauty of a Church. Pss. 45 2nd Pt. L.M.; 45 S.M.; 87 L.M.
92 2nd Pt. L.M.; 48 1st Pt. S.M.;
48 2nd Pt. S.M.
- iii. Its Afflictions, Persecutions and Complaints. Pss. 80 L.M.; 44 C.M.; 74 C.M.; 83 S.M.;
35 1st Pt. C.M.; 14 2nd Pt. C.M.; 53 C.M.
- iv. The Safety, Deliverance, and Triumph of the Church. Pss. 135 1st Pt. L.M.; 46 1st Pt. L.M.
46 2nd Pt. L.M.
- v. The Church and Sinners. Pss. 1 C.M.; 1 L.M.; 1 S.M.; 119 1st Pt. C.M.;
37 3rd Pt. C.M.; 37 1st Pt. C.M.; 94 1st Pt.
C.M.; 11 L.M.; 17 S.M.; 17 L.M. 149 C.M.; 73 LM
- vi. Church Meetings. Pss. 126 C.M.; 126 L.M.; 34 1st Pt. L.M.;
34 1st Pt. C.M.; 66 2nd Pt. C.M.; 106 1st Pt.
L.M.; 102 2nd Pt. C.M.
- vii. Prayer and Praise for Extension of the Church. Pss. 72 1st Pt. L.M.; 72 2nd Pt. L.M.;
45 C.M.; 45 1st Pt. L.M.; 110 1st Pt. L.M.
110 2nd Pt. L.M.; 110 C.M.; 117 C.M.; 117 L.M.;
117 S.M.
- viii. The Sacraments
1. Baptism
 2. The Lord's Supper

ix. The Worship of the Church.

- (a) Private. Pss. 119 2nd Pt. C.M.; 55 S.M.; 26 L.M.
71 2nd Pt.
- (b) Family. Pss. 101 C.M.; 127 L.M.; 127 C.M.;
128 C.M.; 133 S.M.; 133 (double 668).
- (c) Public Worship. Pss. 122 C.M.; 122 (double 668); 134 C.M.;
89 2nd Pt. C.M.; 84 1st Pt. L.M.;
84 2nd Pt. C.M.; 84 (four sixes, 4 fours);
27 1st Pt. C.M.; 27 2nd Pt. C.M.;
65 1st Pt. C.M.; 65 1st Pt. L.M.;
116 2nd Pt. C.M.; 84 C.M.
- (d) The Lord's Day.
1. Morning Pss. 5 C.M.; 19 1st Pt. S.M.; 19 2nd Pt. S.M.
63 1st Pt. C.M.; 92 1st Pt. L.M.;
63 L.M.; 63 S.M.; 118 4th Pt. C.M.
 2. Before Prayer Pss. 99 2nd Pt. S.M.; 95 C.M.
 3. Before Sermon Pss. 95 S.M.; 95 L.M.
 4. After Sermon Ps. 150 C.M.
 5. Evening

6.

The Christian Life.

Pss. 51 1st Pt. L.M.; 25 1st Pt. S.M.; 119 15th Pt. C.M.;
144 1st Pt. C.M.; 119 17th Pt. L.M.; 7 C.M.; 94 2nd Pt. C.M.;
16 1st Pt. C.M.; 120 C.M.; 56 C.M.; 31 2nd Pt. C.M.;
118 1st Pt. C.M.; 143 L.M.; 55 C.M.; 25 3rd Pt. S.M.; 13 C.M.;
13 L.M.; 119 16th Pt. C.M.; 119 12th Pt. C.M.; 38 C.M.
107 2nd Pt. L.M.; 4 L.M.; 85 L.M.; 51 3rd Pt. L.M.; 18 1st Pt. L.M.
40 1st Pt. C.M.; 61 S.M.; 90 3rd Pt. C.M.

7.

Times and Seasons.

- i. Morning Ps. 3 L.M.
- ii. Morning or Evening. Ps. 141 L.M.
- iii. Evening Ps. 4 C.M.; 139 3rd Pt. C.M.
- iv. Seasons of the Year Pss. 65 3rd Pt. C.M.; 65 2nd Pt. C.M.
147 2nd Pt. L.M.; 147 C.M.; 29 L.M.;
147 1st Pt. L.M.

230.

- v. Youth and Age. Pss. 8 1st Pt. L.M.; 34 2nd Pt. L.M.;
34 2nd Pt. C.M.; 90 2nd Pt. C.M.;
71 1st Pt. C.M.; 71 3rd Pt. C.M.
- vi. Days of Prayer and Fasting. Pss. 10 C.M.; 12 C.M.; 12 L.M.; 60 C.M.;
20 L.M.
- vii. Thanksgiving Days. Pss. 144 3rd Pt. L.M.; 18 1st Pt. C.M.;
18 2nd Pt. C.M.; 124 L.M.; 115 2nd Metre;
76 C.M.
- viii. National and Social. Pss. 67 C.M.; 107 last Pt. L.M.;
101 L.M.; 75 L.M.; 21 C.M.; 58 (6 eights);
82 L.M.; 147 2nd Pt. L.M.; 100 2nd Metre.
- ix. Sickness and Recovery. Pss. 102 1st Pt. C.M.; 39 3rd Pt. C.M.;
119 14th Pt. C.M.; 119 last pt. L.M.;
6 L.M.; 6 C.M.; 91 1st Pt. L.M.; 91 2nd Pt.
C.M.; 30 2nd Pt. L.M.; 30 1st Pt. L.M.;
31 1st Pt. C.M.; 116 1st Pt. C.M.; 118 2nd
Pt. C.M.

8.

Time and Eternity.

Pss. 144 2nd Pt. C.M.; 39 2nd Pt. C.M.; 90 1st Pt. C.M.;
90 S.M.

9.

Death and the Resurrection.

Pss. 90 L.M.; 102 3rd Pt. L.M.; 49 L.M.; 49 1st Pt. C.M.;
49 2nd Pt. C.M.; 89 6th Pt. L.M.; 89 last part; 16 3rd Pt. L.M.

10.

The Last Judgment

Pss. 97 1st Pt. L.M.; 9 1st Pt. C.M.; 50 1st Pt. C.M.;
50 3rd Pt. C.M.; 50 (sex tens) 2 versions.

The/

The foregoing Table not only illustrates the structure of Watts' Psalm-Book but its characteristics, excellencies and deficiencies.

Its characteristics: The longest section is devoted to the Church and its worship. It is the gathered church which Watts knew and loved. He reveals in his praises its peculiar ethos, sufferings, problems and prejudices. The section on Scripture shows the biblical basis of puritan worship, and its markedly doctrinal cast. This is again noticed in the section on the person and work of Christ. The main interest is theological and Christological. Notice also that Eschatology comes in for a considerable share of the sung-liturgy of the Church (cf. sects. 8,9,10).

Its excellencies: These may be summarised as follows:-

1. With some omissions to be expected in an imitation of the Hebrew Psalter, most of the liturgical and devotional needs of the Church are provided for.
2. It offers excellent provision for the congregation's praise and adoration.
3. It provides a considerable number of hymns on the Christian life, for public and private use.
4. It has a useful section on hymns for the Lord's Day and its chief moments of worship.
5. Within limitations, to be mentioned below, it supplies praise for special seasons.

Several of these excellencies are due to the fact that Watts was working/

working on the foundation of the Hebrew Psalter. It was the example of the Hebrew Book of Praises that gave him the corpus of Songs of Praise in sect. 1. Again, the Prophetic philosophy of history mirrored in the Hebrew Psalms gave Watts the national and social hymns of sect. 7, viii. And the healthy naturalism of the Psalter provided him with his psalms for the seasons of the year, in sect. 7, iv. Lastly, the universalism of the Book of Psalms was the inspiration of his fine sheaf of hymns on Prayer and Praise for the Extension of the Church, sect. 5, vii. The early eighteenth century was not particularly noted for missionary enterprise, though Watts himself was missionary-minded: the appearance of the finest missionary hymn of all time before the Church awakened to its responsibility towards heathen peoples, "Jesus shall reign", Psalm 72, 2nd part, was due to Watts' living and writing in the universalistic spirit of the Hebrew Psalter. Almost all Watts' universalistic hymns are actually Psalm paraphrases.

Its deficiencies: In mentioning these it should be borne in mind that Watts in this part of his hymnological work was writing on the basis of the Hebrew Psalter. He realised himself the limitations of that Book as a pattern for Christian songs. (Preface). It is not surprising therefore, that the first glaring deficiency of Watts' Imitation should be the want of a section of hymns on the Sacraments, sect. 5, viii. And the second, the lack of a body of hymns on the ministry and teaching of Jesus. Next there is a paucity of hymns with healthy sociological emphasis. The gathered church for which Watts chiefly wrote/

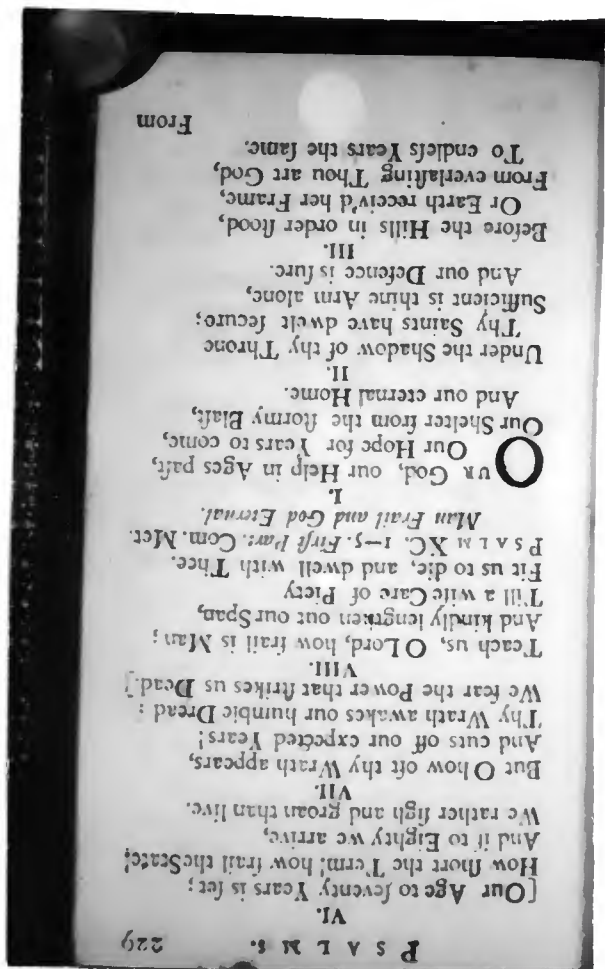
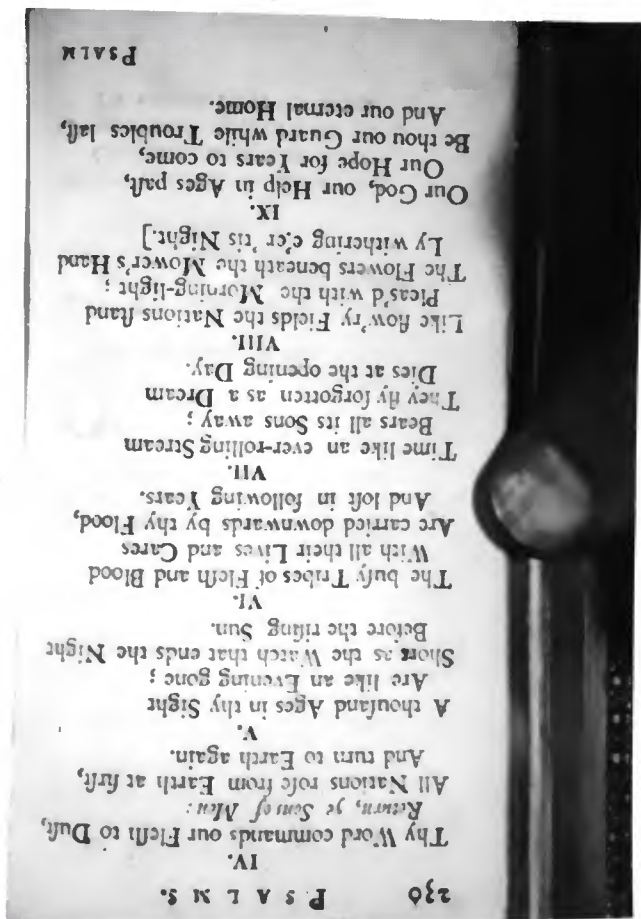
wrote was too antagonistic towards the 'sinners' outside the 'garden walled around', sect. 5, v. His National and Social Hymns, sect. 7, viii, are spoiled by a spirit of national hubris; sometimes they seem to provide the psychological climate for the growth of the British Israel idea.

On the purely hymnodic side of his work he corrected some of these faults in his Psalmody, but not altogether. He did provide a few hymns for Baptism, and a considerable number, amongst them some very fine ones, for the Lord's Supper. But his hymnological work as a whole, is deficient in singable hymns on the ministry of our Lord, and he never truly outgrows the narrowness and isolationism of the eighteenth century gathered church, which turned a blind eye upon society and its problems.

Watts' architectonic skill is more noticeable in the individual Psalms. Each Psalm has a definite theme and a clear progression of thought. The quality of logical strength, which we have said characterises the hymnody of Watts, is also evinced in his Psalm imitations. The best of them, when examined carefully, show his genius as a craftsman, and reveal the structural devices that he uses.

First, there is what might be called the device of weaving the verses into a unity by the repetition of words, images and ideas (cf. chapt. 7 below). This method is seen in many of the Psalm versions, but chiefly perhaps in Ps. 124, A Song for the 5th of November, in which the idea or image of one verse is repeated in the next verse; and the whole Psalm is thus woven into an artistic unity. The/

"Our God, our Help in Ages past"
as it appeared in the first
edition of The Psalms, 1719



The same device is found in Ps. 121, L.M., Divine Protection, Psalm 98 2nd part, The Messiah's Coming and Kingdom, and Psalm 92, 1st part, A Psalm for the Lord's Day.

Another common device is the use of a refrain. In this, Watts foreshadows the more various methods of later hymn-writers. The device of the refrain in Watts' hands follows four courses:-

1. The repetition of an entire verse. Cf. Psalm 57, where verse 3 is repeated as verse 6. Also Psalm 146, 6.8's, in which verse 1 is repeated with slight modification as the last verse. See again Psalm 139, 1st Pt. L.M.

This method is used to perfection in Psalm 90, 1st C.M.

"Our God, our Help in Ages past".

2. The repetition of a couplet. See Psalm 80, which has three parts separated from one another by 'Pauses', each part ending with the same couplet,

Turn us to Thee, thy Love restore,
We shall be sav'd, and sigh no more.

3. The alternate repetition of a line or couplet. See Psalm 136, L.M.
4. The use of Refrains or Choruses.

(a) Within each stanza, cf. Ps. 136, C.M.

(b) At the close of each stanza, cf. Ps. 50, The Last Judgment, (Last version). Commenting on this, Watts says:-

"(I have added) a Chorus, or, as some call it, the Burden of the Song, betwixt every Four lines. I hope it will not be displeasing to the more Musical Part of my Readers to be entertained with such a Variety".

(1st edition, p.140).

Two other devices which illustrate Watts' genius for structure are seen in the version of Psalm 147, 1st Pt. The Divine Nature, Providence and Grace. This is a seven stanza version, separated into two parts at verse 4 by a Pause. The first section constitutes a hymn of praise beginning, "Praise ye the Lord: 'Tis good to raise". The first stanza, after Watts' characteristic manner, is a call to praise, stanzas two and three suggest reasons for the worshipper's adoration, and the last verse is a general ascription of might and glory to God.¹¹ It would be difficult to find a better example of a praise hymn. Moreover, the version is held together in unity by the clear progression of its thought, and artistically by the repetition of the word 'Lord', or the corresponding pronoun in each verse. This is a common device of Watts to weave the stanzas into a unity of thought.

The verses after the pause (vv.5-7) illustrate another structural device which Watts often adopts but seldom with more neatness and nimbleness than here. An examination of these four verses shows how he uses alliteration, assonance, coupled with verbal simplicity to achieve unity of sense and structure.

There are comparatively few of Watts' Psalm imitations that can be used in their entirety in the worship of the modern Church, either because they reflect an outworn theology, or conditions of life that no longer exist. In some cases, inequality of poetic treatment, with consequent banalities of expression bar his Psalms, except in carefully/

carefully edited parts, from present day use in public worship.

In the following list we give the first verses of what we think are the best of the Psalm imitations, placing them within the liturgical framework already given, to show that Watts wrote well for almost every occasion of the worship of his day:

1.

THE ETERNAL GOD.

i. HIS ATTRIBUTES, WORSHIP AND PRAISE.

Psalm 113, L.M. God Sovereign and Gracious.

Ye Servants of Th'Almighty King,
In every Age his Praises sing;
Where e'er the Sun shall rise or set,
The Nations shall his Praise repeat.

Psalm 103, 1st Pt. S.M. Praise for Spiritual and Temporal Mercies.

O Bless the Lord, my Soul;
Let all within me join,
And aid my Tongue to bless his Name,
Whose Favours are divine.

Psalm 100 1st Metre. Praise to our Creator.

Ye Nations round the Earth, rejoice
Before the Lord, your Sovereign King:
Serve him with cheerfull Heart and Voice,
With all your Tongues his Glory sing.

Psalm 146 (6 eights) Praise to God for his Goodness and Truth.

I'll praise my Maker with my Breath;
And when my Voice is lost in Death
Praise shall employ my nobler Powers:
My Days of Praise shall ne'er be past
While Life, and Thought and Being last,
Or Immortality endures.

Psalm 136 L.M. God's Wonders of Creation, etc.

Give to our God immortal Praise;
Mercy and Truth are all his Ways:
Wonders of Grace to God belong,
Repeat his Mercies in your Song.

ii. HIS CREATION AND PROVIDENCE.

Psalm 121 L.M. Divine Protection.

Up to the Hills I lift mine Eyes,
Th'Eternal Hills beyond the Skies;
Thence all her help my Soul derives;
There my Almighty Refuge lives.

Psalm 121, 6666.4444. God our Preserver.

Up ward I lift mine Eyes,
From God is all my Aid;
The God that built the Skies,
And Earth and Nature made:
God is the Tow'r
To which I fly;
His Grace is high
In every Hour.

Psalm 57, L.M. Praise for Protection, Grace and Truth.

My God, in whom are all the Springs
Of boundless Love and Grace unknown,
Hide me beneath thy spreading Wings
Till the dark Cloud is overblown.

Psalm 147, 1st Pt. The Divine Nature, Providence and Grace.

Praise ye the Lord: 'Tis good to raise
Our Hearts and Voices in his Praise:
His Nature and his Works invite
To make his Duty our Delight.

2.

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

i. HIS FIRST AND SECOND ADVENT.

Psalm 98, 2nd Pt. C.M. The Messiah's Coming and Kingdom.

Joy to the World; the Lord is come;
Let Earth receive her King:
Let every Heart prepare him Room
And Heaven and Nature sing.

v. HIS ASCENSION AND EXALTATION.

Psalm 99. 1st Pt. Christ's Kingdom and Majesty.

The God Jehovah reigns,
Let all the Nations fear,
Let Sinners tremble at his Throne,
And Saints be humble there.

4.

THE SCRIPTURE.

i. ITS PROPERTIES

Psalm 19 L.M. The Books of Nature and of Scripture, etc.

The Heavens declare thy Glory, Lord,
In every Star thy Wisdom shines:
But when our Eyes behold thy Word,
We read thy Name in fairer Lines.

Psalm 119 8th Pt. The Word of God is the Saints Portion, etc.

Lord, I have made thy Word my Choice,
My lasting Heritage:
There shall my noblest Powers rejoice,
My warmest Thoughts engage.

5.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, ITS LIFE AND WORSHIP.

ii. THE BEAUTY OF A CHURCH.

Psalm 92 2nd Pt. L.M. The Church is the Garden of God.

Lord, 'tis a pleasant Thing to stand
In Gardens planted by thine Hand;
Let me within thy Courts be seen
Like a young Cedar fresh and green.

vii. PRAYER AND PRAISE FOR THE EXTENSION OF THE CHURCH./

vii. PRAYER AND PRAISE FOR THE EXTENSION OF THE CHURCH.

Psalm 72 1st Pt. L.M. The Kingdom of Christ.

Great God, whose universal Sway,
The known and unknown Worlds obey,
Now give the Kingdom to thy Son,
Extend his Power, exalt his Throne.

Psalm 72 2nd Pt. L.M. Christ's Kingdom among the Gentiles.

Jesus shall reign where e'er the Sun
Does (sic) his successive Journeys run;
His Kingdom stretch from Shore to Shore,
Till Moons shall wax and wane no more.

Psalm 117 L.M. Praise to God from all Nations.

From all that dwell below the Skies
Let the Creator's Praise arise:
Let the Redeemer's Name be sung
Thro' every Land, by every Tongue.

ix. THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH.

(a) PRIVATE

Psalm 71 2nd Pt. Christ our Strength and Righteousness.

My Saviour, my almighty Friend,
When I begin thy Praise,
Where will the growing Numbers end,
The Numbers of thy Grace?

(b) FAMILY

Psalm 133 S.M.Love and Worship in a Family.

Blest are the Sons of Peace,
Whose Hearts and Hopes are One,
Whose kind Designs to serve and please
Thro' all their Actions run.

(c)/

(c) PUBLIC WORSHIP.

Psalm 122 (double 668) Going to Church.

How pleas'd and best was I
 To hear the People cry,
 Come, let us seek our God to Day;
 Yes, with a cheerfull Zeal
 We haste to Zion's Hill,
 and there our Vows and Honours pay.

Psalm 134 C.M. Daily and Nightly Devotion.

Ye that obey th'Immortal King,
 Attend his holy Place,
 Bow to the Glories of his Power,
 And bless his wondrous Grace.

Psalm 84 1st Pt. L.M. The Pleasure of Publick Worship.

How pleasant, how divinely fair,
 O Lord of Hosts, thy Dwelling are!
 With long Desire my Spirit faints
 To meet th'Assemblies of thy Saints.

Psalm 84 2nd Pt. L.M. God and his Church, etc.

Great God, attend while Zion sings
 The Joy that from thy Presence springs:
 To spend one Day with Thee on Earth
 Exceeds a thousand Days of Mirth.

Psalm 84 (6666.4444) Longing for the House of God.

Lord of the Worlds above,
 How pleasant and how fair
 The Dwellings of thy Love,
 Thy Earthly Temples are!
 To thine Abode
 My Heart aspires,
 With warm Desires
 To see my God.

Psalm 65 1st Pt. C.M. A Prayer-hearing God, etc.

Praise waits in Zion, Lord, for Thee;
 There shall our Vows be paid:
 Thou hast an Ear when Sinners pray,
 All Flesh shall seek thine Aid.

(d) THE LORD'S DAY.

MORNING.

Psalm 19 1st Pt S.M. The Book of Nature and Scripture.
For a Lord's Day Morning.

Behold the lofty Sky,
Declares its Maker God,
And all his Starry Works on high
Proclaim his Power abroad.

Psalm 63 1st Ptd. C.M. The Morning of a Lord's Day.

Early my God without Delay
I haste to seek thy Face;
My thirsty Spirit faints away
Without thy chearing Grace.

Psalm 92 1st Pt. L.M. A Psalm for the Lord's Day.

Sweet is the Work, my God, my King,
To praise thy Name give Thanks and Sing;
To shew thy Love by Morning-light,
And talk of all thy Truth at Night.

Psalm 118 4th Pt. C.M. Hosanna; the Lord's Day, etc.

This is the Day the Lord hath made,
He calls the Hours his own;
Let Heaven rejoice, let Earth be glad,
And Praise surround the Throne.

BEFORE PRAYER.

Psalm 99 2nd Pt. S.M. A Holy God Worshipped with Reverence.

Exalt the Lord our God,
And worship at his Feet;
His Nature is all Holiness,
And Mercy is his Seat.

BEFORE SERMON.

Psalm 95 S.M. A Psalm before Sermon.

Come sound his Praise abroad,
And Hymns of Glory sing:
Jehovah is the sovereign God,
The universal King.

AFTER SERMON/

AFTER SERMON.

Psalm 150 C.M. A Song of Praise.

In God's own House pronounce his Praise,
His Grace he there reveals;
To Heaven your Joy and Wonder raise,
For there his Glory dwells.

6

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Psalm 144 1st Pt. C.M. Assistance and Victory in the Spiritual Warfare.

For ever blessed be the Lord,
My Saviour and my Shield;
He sends his Spirit with his Word
To arm me for the Field.

Psalm 61 S.M. Safety in God.

When overwhelm'd with Grief
My Heart within me dies,
Helpless and far from all Relief
To Heaven I lift mine Eyes.

7

TIMES AND SEASONS.

iv. SEASONS OF THE YEAR.

Psalm 147 1st Pt. L.M. The Divine Nature, Providence and Grace.

verses 5-9

Sing to the Lord, exalt him high,
Who spreads his Cloud all round the Sky;
There he prepares the fruitful Rain,
Nor lets the Drops descend in vain.

vii. THANKSGIVING DAYS.

Psalm 124 L.M. A Song for the 5th of November.

Had not the Lord, may Israel say,
Had not the Lord maintain'd our side,
When Men, to make our Lives a Prey,
Rose like the swelling of the Tide, etc.

viii. NATIONAL.

Psalm 100 2nd Metre. Praise to our Creator.

Sing to the Lord with joyfull Voice;
Let every Land his Name adore;
The British Isles shall send the Noise
Across the Ocean to the Shore.

8

TIME AND ETERNITY.

Psalm 90 1st Pt C.M. Man Frail and God Eternal.

Our God, our Help in Ages past,
Our Hope for Years to come,
Our Shelter from the stormy Blast,
And our eternal Home.

It will be noticed from the above list that Watts' best work was done in two fields of Psalmody: that of sheer praise and adoration, and that which pertains to the fellowship of the Church and its ordinances. It would be difficult to say in which of these two he shows greater facility and displays more joyous fervour. Hymnologists of the early nineteenth century offered the palm to Watts for his hymns of praise and adoration. Josiah Conder in the "Advertisement" to the 1836 edition of The Congregational Hymn Book writes:

"The truth is that for psalms and hymns of direct adoration and thanksgiving, the Christian Church is more indebted to Dr. Watts than to any other individual, not to say, than to all others. In one of the best Collections extant...of 110 hymns of praise, 80 are from Dr. Watts: and on the subject of Divine Perfections all are from Dr. Watts, except four".

A last word. We claim for Watts' Psalm-Book for the Christian Church/

Church a place in English literature. It was written in the Augustan Age when the Imitation was a literary genre popular in intellectual circles. Watts did for the Hebrew Psalmists what Pope did for Horace, and what Johnson was shortly to do for Juvenal. As Pope applied to the personalities and events of the Georgian era the descriptions and imagery with which Horace portrayed the men and things of his age, and as Johnson transferred to the London of George II the rebuke and disparagement lavished by Juvenal upon the throne of Domitian, so Watts set forth the Christian worship and life of his own age in terms descriptive of Hebrew life and Hebrew worship in the days of David and Hezekiah, and in the time preceding and following the Captivity. Its theological and liturgical significance aside, Watts' Imitation is a literary production of no mean order.

NOTES

CHAPTER 6

- 1 Cf. Thomas Milner, The Life, Times and Correspondence of the Rev. Isaac Watts, D.D., 1834. p.252.
- 2 Cf. Chapter 1, above.
- 3 Cf. A Century of Select Psalms, And Portions of the Psalms of David, Especially those of Praise, Turned into Metre, and fitted to the usual Tunes in Parish-Churches. For the use of the Charter-House, London. By John Patrick. 5th ed. corrected, 1691.
- 4 Cf. Richard Baxter, Poetical Fragments....., 3rd ed. 1699 "To the Reader", p.V (unnumbered in text).
- 5 Cf. examples of this method above.
- 6 Cf. A Version of the Psalms of David, Fitted to the Tunes Used in Churches. By the Honourable Sir John Denham, Knight of the Bath. London, 1714.
- 7 Cf. Chapter 1, above.
- 8 Cf. Ps.19 v.4, and Romans 10 v.18.
- 9 The presence of these interpretative rubrics in the Old Version is further proof of Lutheran influence. Cf. Chapter 3 above. This is further confirmed by the introduction into the actual text of the Psalms of the Old Version of evangelical elements. cf. Chapter 9 below for examples of this.
- 10 The hostility of the gathered church to the 'World' is illustrated in Pss. 1 S.M. and L.M.; 37 1st Ptd. and 3rd Pt.; 49 L.M.; 50 1st Pt.; 55 S.M.; 73 1st Pt. C.M.; 119 1st Pt. C.M.; 149. The trials of the Church under persecution by Psalms 7; 14 2nd Pt; 44; 46 1st Pt. and 2nd Pt; 53; 74; 83; 119 17th Pt.; 129.
Its/

Its joy in the ordinances of worship, by Psalms 27 1st C.M.; 34 1st L.M.; 42 1st Pt; 46 1st Pt L.M.; 46 2nd Pt. L.M.; 48 both versions; 63 1st C.M.; 65 1st Pt L.M. and 1st Pt. C.M.; 84 L.M. 1st Pt. and 2nd Pt. L.M. and C.M.; 84 6666/4444; 92 1st Pt C.M.; 92 2nd Pt L.M.; 102 2nd Pt. C.M.; 106 1st Pt. L.M.; 116 2nd Pt. C.M.; 122 both parts; 133 C.M.; 133 S.M.; 135 L.M.; 147 1st Pt. L.M.

11

Cf. section on the liturgical patterns of Watts' Hymns in chapter 9 below.

H Y M N S

A N D

Spiritual Songs.

In Three BOOKS.

- I. Collected from the Scriptures.**
- II. Compos'd on Divine Subjects.**
- III. Prepared for the Lord's Supper.**

With an ESSAY

Towards the Improvement of Christian Psalmody, by the Use of Evangelical Hymns in Worship, as well as the Psalms of David.

By I. WATTS. *W. H. C.*

And they sung a new Song, saying, Thou art worthy, &c. for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us, &c. Rev. 5. 9.

Soliti essent (i. e. Christiani) convenire, carmenque Christo quasi Deo dicere. Plinius in Epist.

L O N D O N,

**Printed by J. Humphreys, for John Lawrence,
at the Angel in the Bultrey. 1707.**

CHAPTER 7THE RESPONSE OF THE REDEEMED COMMUNITY

Students of the evolution of Watts' hymnody have been handicapped for the want of fuller bibliographical knowledge. This was so in connection with the Lyrics (chapt. 2). But it is equally the case with the Hymns and Spiritual Songs, 1707. We know of the existence of only two copies of the first edition, and they are both in American Libraries.¹ The second edition (1709) is as difficult to come by.

A comparison of the first and second editions brings out the following distinguishing features of the former:

1. Its preface, unsigned and undated, is substantially the same in all later issues, except that a paragraph calling attention to a subjoined Essay on Psalmody is omitted in subsequent editions with the omission of the Essay itself.
2. The number of hymns in the first edition is as follows:²

Book 1	Nos.1-78	of the 1709 and later editions.
Book 2	Nos.1-110	do.
Book 3	Nos.1-22	do.
		followed by a few doxologies, which were numbered 26-37 in the later editions, but were unnumbered in 1707.

The hymns of the 1707 edition were all confined to the three well-known metres.

As the original numbering is retained in all editions, it is a simple matter to trace the hymns added to the second edition.

These/

These are:-

Book 1 Nos.79-150

Book 2 Nos.111-170

Book 3 Nos.23-25 and Doxologies 38-45.

All the Hymns in the metre of the 148th Psalm appeared in 1709.

3. The original text of the hymns is ofcourse, the unique interest of the first edition and there are some differences between it and later issues. The following are among the most interesting of them:

"Come, we that love the Lord" (Book 2, Hymn 30), has for its closing lines:

We're marching thro' Immanuel's Ground
To a more joyful Sky,

not,

To fairer Worlds on high. (1709)

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove" (Book 2, Hymn 34) has for its opening line, "Come Sacred Spirit, heavenly Dove", and the 2nd verse reads:

Look, how we grovel here below,
And hug these trifling Toys,

not,

Fond of these trifling Toys. (1709)

"When I can read my Title clear" (Book 2, Hymn 65), closes thus:

Nor dares a Wave of Trouble roll
Across my peaceful Breast

instead of,

And not a Wave of Trouble roll
Across my peaceful Breast. (1709)

"When I survey the wondrous Cross" (Book 3, Hymn 7), has for its second line:

Where the young Prince of Glory dy'd

and/

and not,

On which the Prince of Glory dy'd. (1709)

"Why do we mourn departing Friends" (Book 2, Hymn 3), has in the 5th verse:

Thence he arose and clim'd (sic) the Sky
instead of,

Thence he arose, ascending high (1709)

"Alas! and did my Saviour bleed?" (Book 2, Hymn 9), has at the close of the 2nd verse:

While the firm mark of Wrath Divine
His Soul in Anguish stood

instead of,

While all expos'd to Wrath divine
The glorious Sufferer stood. (1709)

"Now to the Lord a noble Song" (Book 2, Hymn 47), has in the 5th verse "Ye Skies" for "ye heavens", and at the close of the hymn,

And play his Name on Harps of Gold

instead of,

And sing his Name to Harps of Gold. (1709).

Another important feature of the first edition, to which reference has been made, in chapt. 6, is the presence of fourteen psalm imitations, which were withdrawn after the first edition, appearing again, with alterations, in The Psalms of David Imitated. These were given in facsimile in the previous chapter on the Christianised Psalm.

5. The last of the characteristic features of the first edition is the Short Essay Towards the Improvement of Psalmody, pp.233-276, which was never again printed in Watts' life time, and which we have seen was the manifesto of his Psalmodic Reform (chapt.5 above). The whole of this historic writing is given in facsimile in the Appendix to the Thesis, cf.pp.8-31

a/

The first edition of the Hymns was published in July 1707. In

a letter to the Rev. Samuel Say, dated 23rd December, 1708, Watts writes:

"My bookseller urges me to reprint my Hymns, and talks of another edition of the Poems. I earnestly beg you to point me those lines in either which are offensive to the weak and pious, and shocking and disgusting to the polite, or obscure to the vulgar capacity, or, in short, whatever you think should be mended, and if you please with your amendment; but I entreat it especially for the Hymns in a fortnight's time."

In another letter to Say dated 12th March, 1709, Watts explains the manner of his revision for the second edition of the Hymns, as follows:

"The method I took was, to collect all the remarks together, that several friends had made by word or letter, and got a friend or two together, and spent a whole day in perusing and considering the remarks; I agreed to their judgments I think in all things; in the whole, there are near half a hundred lines altered, I hope always for the better, etc." *

The second edition appeared in April 1709. In the preface the familiar paragraph beginning, "If any Expressions occur to the Reader that savour of an Opinion different from his own", etc., here first appears, and allusions to the earlier edition become necessary. The last paragraph, as thus modified, reads as follows:

"If the Lord who inhabits the Praises of Israel shall refuse to smile upon this Attempt for the Reformation of Psalmody amongst the Churches, yet I humbly hope that his blessed Spirit will make these Composures useful to private Christians; and if they may but attain the Honour of being esteem'd pious Meditations, to assist the devout and the retir'd Soul in the Exercises of Love, Faith and Joy, 'twill be a valuable Compensation of my Labours; my Heart shall rejoice at the Notice of it, and my God shall receive the Glory. This was my Hope and Vow in the first Publication, and 'tis now my Duty to acknowledge to him with Thankfulness how useful he has made these Composures already, to the Comfort and Edification of Societies and of private Persons; and upon the same Grounds I have a better Prospect and a bigger Hope of much more Service to the Church by the large Improvements of this Edition, if the Lord who dwells in Zion shall favour it with his continu'd Blessing".

Immediately/

Immediately after the preface there are a number of interesting "Advertisements", informing the reader of the changes and additions in the second edition. There are five of these:

1. There are almost 150 new Hymns added, and one or more suited to every Theme and Subject in Divinity. Having found by Converse with Christians what Words and Lines in the former made them less useful, I have not only made various Corrections in them, but have endeavour'd to avoid the same Mistakes in all the new Composures. And whereas many of the former were too particularly adapted to special Frames and Seasons of the Christian Life, almost all that are added have a more general and extensive Sense, and may be assum'd and sung by most Persons in a worshipping Congregation.
2. About 14 or 15 Psalms that were translated in the first Edition are left our in this, because I intend (if God afford Life and Assistance,) to convert the biggest part of the Book of Psalms into Spiritual Songs for the Use of Christians; yet the same Numbers are still apply'd to the Hymns that there might be no Confusion between the 1st and 2nd Edition.
3. In all the longer Hymns, and in some of the shorter, there are several Stanzas included in Crotchets thus, (), which Stanzas may be left out in Singing without disturbing the Sense. Those parts are also included in such Crotchets which contain Words too Poetical for meaner Understandings, or too particular for whole Congregations to sing. But after all, 'tis best in publick Psalmody for the Minister to chuse the particular Parts and Verses of the Psalm or Hymn that is to be sung, rather than leave it to the Judgment of casual Determination of him that leads the Tune.
4. The Essay concerning the Improvement of Psalmody by the use of Evangelical Hymns, which took up many Pages of the last Edition, is quite left out here, partly lest the Bulk should swell too much, but chiefly because I intend a more Compleat Treatise of Psalmody, in which the Substance of that Essay will be interspersed, and I hope with fuller Evidence of the Duty of singing new Songs to him that sits upon the Throne since the Lamb is ascended thither too. (note)⁵
5. I ought also to tell those who have provided themselves of the first Edition, that the Bookseller has been willing to oblige them so far as to print all the Additions that are found here in a Supplement by themselves, if they are not willing to be as the Expense of a new Book.

These/

These "Advertisements" illustrate, among other things, the difficulties Watts encountered in the transition from devotional lyric to hymn. For example, the first advertisement refers to Watts' growing awareness that the religious sentiment of a hymn for public use must not be too particular and definitely not private. In his attempt to express in hymnody "a more general and extensive Sense" he is seeking to provide a hymn-book for the redeemed community. Up to the completion of the second edition of the Hymns (1709), Watts had removed those pieces that were neither devotional lyrics nor hymns and placed them in the two editions of Horae Lyricae. But even in 1709 there were many verses in his Hymns which were hardly suitable for public praise which were not removed in this way, probably because there was no room for them in Horae Lyricae. These Watts placed within brackets. They could be omitted in public worship without breaking the sequence of the hymn.

II.

No attempt will be made to summarise the original preface: its main arguments have already been stated in the precis of the Short Essay, (chapt.5), and of the preface to the Psalms (chapt.6), and elsewhere. Should the reader wish to consult the original preface he will find a facsimile of it in the Appendix pp.32-39.

The chief interest of this preface to the student of Watts' hymnology is its enunciation of the philosophy underlying the praise of/
of/

of the Christian Church. As we have noticed⁶ Watts perceived that worship consisted of two elements:

1. A descending movement of God to man, represented by the reading and preaching of the Word; 2. an ascending movement of man to God, expressed in the prayers and sung praises of the congregation. This conception of Psalmody as a response constituted his abiding contribution to the philosophy of worship. He thinks of a full act of Christian worship under the figure of a two-way traffic between God and man. A modern poet approaches the idea:

Thy Word comes down to me
From dread Eternity,
Ascends in prayer to Thee
Through my infirmity.
And with the flow
Upward, below,
Our freighted galleons go;
Mine with a load of woe,
Thine with love's argosy.

But, according to Watts, the human response is not merely the expression of man's "woe" or the confession of his "infirmity". It may be these things on occasion. More comprehensively, it is the response of the whole of his redeemed personality to the love of Christ which found him chained and set him free. And because it is this, its predominant note is one of abounding joy. But this response is not the response of man in his privacy. The redemption he has experienced came to him through the redeemed community; and his response to God's grace is really the voice of the praising congregation. Watts sought a hymnody that should represent as fully as/

as possible a Church of pardoned sinners exulting in their Saviour.

In the preface (p.IV) Watts speaks of hymnody as "our Ascent toward Heaven". In his stress upon the Christian community's response in glad thankfulness for God's gracious initiative in Christ, Watts seems to come nearer to Luther's conception of sung praise than Calvin's. But as a matter of historical fact, Calvin, as well as Luther, conceived the liturgy as the response of the congregation to the grace of God. The congregation answers the Word of God with the word of its prayer and praise. Schaff⁷ summarises the situation by saying that they now had "in their own tongue the Bible, the Catechism, and the Hymn-Book, so that God might speak directly to them in His Word, and that they might directly answer Him in their songs". Praise was thought of as the response of the redeemed community. It was not private devotion but liturgy - conjoint praise. Watts' work was thus in alignment with Calvin's: it belonged to the Reformed tradition.. Calvin regarded praise as sung prayer:⁸ thus in his teaching we have in nuce Isaac Watts' philosophy of response. But Watts purifies and humanises the Reformer's ideas. For example, if sung praise is really the prayer of the congregation, it cannot be couched in the language and conceptions of a bygone age: it must be the expression of the people's present experience, sincere and direct. Before Watts set about to reform the Psalmody of the Churches, congregations had heard God speak directly to them in His Word, and they had answered Him in their songs; but their response/

response had never been emotionally satisfying, because it had never been direct: it had never yet flowed unimpeded from their own experience of the grace of God in Christ. Another thing. Calvin had emphasised perhaps too much the descending movement of God to man. Watts by stressing the other side of the relationship retrieved the balance of primitive Christian worship.⁹

It is true to say that Watts gave the English speaking churches for the first time, a Psalmody that may be honestly described as the response of a redeemed community.

This descriptive term suggests two things about Watts' hymnody. First, it is a communal response he provides in Hymns and Spiritual Songs. He is not concerned chiefly with the soul of the worshipper in its privacy, but in the koinonia - the Fellowship of the brethren. As we have said, the "Advertisements" added to the preface of the 2nd edition of the Hymns, 1709, remind us that Watts was careful to omit from his Hymn-book almost all pieces that have not "a general and extensive Sense, and may (not) be assum'd and sung by most Persons in a worshipping Congregation". He wishes to omit, as he tells us, those verses which are "too particular for whole Congregations to sing". This was an austere ideal for a warm devotional poet and religious mystic to set before himself, and it would have been strange if he had completely attained it. Some writers think that Watts' ideal/

ideal from the literary angle was too austere, and that he and his school failed because they underestimated the poetic and aesthetic capacity of the common worshipper. Nineteenth century hymnology illustrates a reaction from the aesthetic poverty of the Wattsian hymn by producing the 'poetic hymn' which is, alas! too often marked by the more serious poverty of Biblical and theological content.¹⁰ However, the best of Watts' hymns do have the communal note without sacrificing devotional warmth or the spirit of poetry. Secondly, Watts writes for a redeemed community. His work centres in the Atonement. His reform is due to the honour of the Church's Lord and Redeemer:

Let the old Heathens tune their Song
Of great Diana and of Jove,
But the sweet Theme that moves my Tongue
Is my Redeemer and his Love,

he writes in one of his early hymns.¹¹ Watts' Hymnody centres in Christian Redemption through the Cross, just as Jewish Psalmody centred in the old Sacrificial System.¹² The preface to the Hymns and Spiritual Songs reminds us frequently of this:

"(In these Hymns we are) all conversing with God the Father
by the new and living Way of Access to the Throne, even the
Person and the Mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ."
(pp.VII-VIII)

The Hymns are written that the Church might worship its Redeemer

"according to the more glorious Liberty of the Gospel (p.XIII)
....to the Lamb that was slain and now lives, I have addrest
many a Song. (p.VIII).

In/

In fact, the only unity which the first edition of the Hymns appears to the casual reader to possess is the abounding thankfulness to the Redeemer which characterises so many of the individual compositions. The first hymn of Book 1, and the last in Book 3, have the same theme - the Church's adoration of the Lamb that was slain and now is exalted in Glory.¹³

But though Watts revived the conception of singing of the Primitive Church, as the response of the redeemed community, coming naturally and sincerely from its own experience, he kept a place too, and a large one, for the Puritan use of Psalmody as an instrument of edification.¹⁴ Psalms and hymns have a teaching office too. One of their purposes is to build up the faith of the gathered Church; to edify the believer:

"Instruction is allow'd to be one End of Psalmody"
(Preface to Psalms, p.XII).

A good number of Watts' hymns fall into this category of "instruction". Sometimes indeed they are no more the pure response of the Christian worshipper than the Psalms were of the Jew in Temple and Synagogue worship. More often they are expressions of some theological or ethical truth versified in homely, lucid and nervous English. In such doctrinal hymns Watts departs all unconsciously from his revolutionary idea of praise as heartfelt response to the Redeemer; and exploits the psalm or hymn as a means of convincing/

convincing men of the truth of a system of theological thought. Watts has been criticised for this, rightly we think, by some students of hymnology.¹⁵ But in fairness we shall try to show below that even the hymns of edification sometimes have elements that turn their instruction into response. (Chapt.9).

III.

In his 1707 preface Watts outlines the contents of his volume of hymns. It consists of three books: Scripture paraphrases, hymns "of meer humane Composure", and a group of compositions for use at the Lord's Supper. Its very lay-out confirms what we have said in other places, that in his hymnological work Watts was guided by the principle of festina lente.¹⁶ His book opens with a sheaf of accepted Paraphrases, more or less after the manner of William Barton,¹⁷ and ends with a batch of Communion hymns such as Joseph Stennett and Joseph Boyse had produced before him.¹⁸ But sandwiched between these collections of more conservative work - not too conspicuous to the reader's eye - is the new species of freely devised hymns. The careful student will notice, after an examination of the first book of the Hymns and Spiritual Songs, that even towards the end of it Watts is preparing the reader for the revolutionary type of hymn that will be found in book 2. And he does this in such a gentle and unobtrusive manner that we are hardly aware of the transition. Yet a transition has taken place, for hymns 146-150 in book 1/

book 1 constitute a group of 'paraphrases' in which the writer has exercised greater freedom with the Biblical text, ranging more widely over it, and allowing his creative faculty longer rein. These characteristics are not confined to this small group of hymns in book 1; they are occasionally found in scattered pieces, see for example, Nos. 140, 143, for which no Scripture text is supplied.

From the Appendix, pp. 78-100, the reader will be familiar with the first lines and original titles of Watts' Hymns, and will see quite clearly how in the two editions Watts constructed his Hymn-book.

On the surface, the Hymns and Spiritual Songs hardly seems to be a Hymn-book at all. John Wesley evidently was not greatly impressed with Watts' work as a Hymn-book. In presenting his own Collection of Hymns, For the Use of the People called Methodists, Wesley says,

"The hymns are not carelessly jumbled together,
but carefully ranged under proper heads,
according to the experience of real Christians.
So that this book is in effect, a little body
of experimental and practical divinity". (3rd ed. 1782, p. IV).

The apparent lack of order and system in Watts' 'Hymnal' was felt within Congregationalism at the end of the eighteenth century, and in 1802, John Rippon arranged the Psalms and Hymns, along with other pieces by Watts, "carefully...under their proper heads".¹⁹ An examination of Rippon's Arrangement, which adds nothing to the text and titles of Watts' hymns, convinces the reader that the want of structure and system in Watts' hymnody is more apparent than real. The/

The fact that the hymns are "carelessly jumbled together" does not mean that the book as a whole is just a collection of fugitive hymns, and occasional meditations with no organic relation and cohesion. The opposite is the truth. Nor was Wesley's Hymn-book the first "little body of experimental and practical divinity" sung by the common folk of England.

There are two reasons why Watts, whose mind was of a most logical and systematic cast, presented his Psalms and Hymns in such a higgledy-piggledy fashion. (Be it remembered, however, in extenuation that he did supply both books with fairly extensive indices). First, he worked according to the principle of festina lente.²⁰ It would have been easy for him to have published his Christian Psalter in the form of a modern Hymnal, but this would have been too abrupt a change in custom, and his reforming purpose might have been defeated at its very inception had he adopted such an entirely new format for his Psalm-book. No, he would wait. The lay-out must not be too strange for a conservative people: the nearer it approaches the appearance of the Singing Psalms the better. The same principle guided him in the production of the Hymns. But in their case, another factor had to be considered. Watts sold the copyright of the first edition to John Lawrence the publisher, and there is every probability that on financial grounds Lawrence would oppose the rearrangement of the hymns in later editions.

That the individual hymns are part of a liturgical structure may be seen from the following Table:-

The/

The Structure of Watts' Hymns and Spiritual Songs,²¹

1707 - 1709

(1) The Eternal God.

i. His Attributes, Worship
and Praise.

Hymn 26, Book 2; 17 B.2; 67 B.2; 80 B.2;
22 B.2; 99 B.2; 70 B.2; 115 B.2;
86 B.1; 42 B.1; 166 B.2; 167 B.2;
168 B.2; 169 B.2; 170 B.2; 87 B.2;
27 B.2; 71 B.2.

ii. His Creation and
Providence.

147 B.2; 19 B.2; 83 B.1; 109 B.2:

(2) The Lord Jesus Christ.

i. His Adoration and
Praise.

51 B.2; 2 B.1; 47 B.2; 16 B.1;
89 B.2; 45 B.3; 62 B.1; 63 B.1;
5 B.2; 1 B.1; 25 B.1; 49 B.1;
21 B.2; 79 B.2.

ii. His Character and
Offices.

13 B.1; 132 B.2; 146 B.1;
147 B.1; 148 B.1; 149 B.1;
150 B.1.

iii. His first and second
Advent.

3 B.1; 60 B.1; 135 B.2; 136 B.2;

iv. His Ministry, etc.

103 B.2; 104 B.2; 139 B.2;

v. His Sufferings and
Death.

114 B.2; (cf. Sacrament of Lord's
Supper.)

vi. His Resurrection.

76 B.2; 26 B.1; 137 B.2;

vii. His Ascension and
Exaltation.

141 B.1; 142 B.1; 43 B.2;
83 B.2; 84 B.2.

viii. His Intercession.

36 B.2; 37 B.2; 145 B.1; 12 B.2;

(3)/

(3) The Holy Spirit.

1. His Coming at Pentecost. 144 B.2
- ii. Addresses to Him. 34 B.2; 133 B.2; 144 B.1; 23 B.2.
- iii. His Influence and Graces.
- (a) Fear and Hope
 - (b) Humility 131 B.1.
 - (c) Joy 57 B.2; 73 B.2; 59 B.2; 30 B.2;
 - (d) Faith 140 B.1; 112 B.1; 142 B.2;
100 B.1; 125 B.2; 120 B.1;
129 B.1; 162 B.2; 14 B.1.
 - (e) Knowledge
 - (f) Liberality
 - (g) Love 38 B.2; 42 B.2; 108 B.1; 130 B.1;
126 B.1; 126 B.1; 133 B.1; 134 B.1.
 - (h) Prudence and Seal
 - (i) Repentance. 123 B.1; 74 B.2; 105 B.2;
106 B.2; 9 B.2; 101 B.1.
 - (j) Resignation. 129 B.1; 5 B.1;
 - (k) Sincerity 136 B.1.
 - (l) Trust and Confidence 103 B.1.

(4) The Blessed Trinity.

26 B.3 1st L.M.; 29 B.3 2nd L.M.;
27 B.3; 28 B.3 1st Pt; 30 B.3;
38 B.3; 39 B.3

(5) The Holy Scripture./

(5) The Holy Scripture.

- i. Its Properties. 53 B.1; 151 B.2; 119 B.2;
- ii. Law and Gospel. 116 B.1; 151 B.1; 121 B.2; 120 B.2;
118 B.1; 128 B.1; 131 B.2; 119 B.1;
138 B.2; 126 B.2; 10 B.1;
- iii. Doctrines and Blessings.
- (a) The Covenant of Grace. 40 B.2; 139 B.1.
- (b) Election. 54 B.1; 117 B.1; 96 B.1; 11 B.1; 12 B.1;
96 B.2; 97 B.2;
- (c) The Fall and Redemption. 57 B.1; 124 B.1; 128 B.2; 160 B.2;
24 B.2; 150 B.2; 153 B.2; 156 B.2;
157 B.2.
(Redemption) 78 B.2; 29 B.2; 82 B.2;
35 B.2; 118 B.2; 155 B.2; 148 B.2;
61 B.1.
- (d) Justification. 94 B.1; 154 B.2; 20 B.1.
- (e) Pardon. 85 B.2.
- (f) Communion with God. 94 B.2; 93 B.2; 15 B.2; 16 B.2.
- (g) Sanctification. 132 B.1; 104 B.1; 97 B.1; 98 B.1; 90 B.2;
- (h) Perseverance 51 B.1;
- (i) Salvation. 88 B.2; 111 B.1; 137 B.1; 4 B.2;
- (j) Regeneration. 95 B.1; 99 B.1; 130 B.2; 161 B.2;
- (k) Adoption. 64 B.1; 143 B.1;
- iv. Invitations and Promises. 7 B.1; 127 B.1; 93 B.1;
(Promises) 9 B.1; 15 B.1; 32 B.1;
84 B.1; 85 B.1; 87 B.1; 125 B.1; 138 B.1;
69 B.2; 60 B.2.

(6) The Christian Church, its Life and Worship/

(6) The Christian Church, its Life and Worship.

- i. Christ and His Church. Hymns 66-78 (First Book)
- ii. The Settlement of a Church.
- iii. The Beauty of a Church. Hymn 152, Book 2.
- iv. Its Afflictions etc.
- v. Safety, Deliverance, and Triumph of the Church. 39 B.1; 8 B.1; 64 B.2; 28 B.1;
29 B.1; 56 B.1; 58 B.1; 59 B.2.
- vi. The Church and Sinners. 56 B.2.
- vii. Church Meetings.
- viii. Prayer and Praise for Extension of the Church. 50 B.1; 21 B.1.
- ix. The Worship of the Church.
- (a) Private. 122 B.2.
- (b) Family
- (c) Public Worship. 108 B.2; 45 B.2; 123 B.2; 145 B.2.
- (d) The Lord's Day.
1. Morning 14 B.2; 72 B.2;
2. Before Prayer
3. Before Sermon 165 B.1.
4. After Sermon 135 B.1.
5. Evening
- (e) The Sacraments 141 B.2.
1. Baptism 52 B.1; 122 B.1; 113 B.1; 114 B.1.
121 B.1; 134 B.2; 127 B.2.
2. The Lord's Supper Hymn 1 to 25 in Book 3.
cf. 1,2,5,6,7,17,23.

(7) The Christian Life.

Hymns 48 B.2; 41 B.2; 10 B.2;
11 B.2; 106 B.1; 81 B.2;
116 B.2; 140 B.2; 48 B.1; 77 B.2.
25 B.2; 98 B.2; 163 B.2; 20 B.2.
50 B.2; 102 B.1; 53 B.2; 100 B.2.
54 B.2; 65 B.2; 117 B.2; 101 B.2.
146 B.2;

(8) Times and Seasons/

(8) Times and Seasons.

i.	Morning	<u>79 B.1</u> ; 6 B.2; <u>81 B.1</u> ;
ii.	Morning or Evening	8 B.2;
iii.	Evening	<u>80 B.1</u> ; <u>7 B.2</u> ;
iv.	Seasons of the Year	
v.	Youth and Age.	91 B.1; 89 B.1; 90 B.1.
vi.	Days of Prayer	
vii.	Thanksgiving Days	30 B.1; 1 B.2;
viii.	National and Social	111 B.2; 149 B.2; 92 B.2; 1 B.2;
ix.	Sickness and Recovery.	55 B.1.

(9) Time and Eternity.

164 B.2; 88 B.1; 39 B.2; 58 B.2;
32 B.2; 55 B.2; 13 B.2;

(10) Death and the Resurrection.

61 B.2; 63 B.2; 24 B.1; 110 B.2;
52 B.2; 17 B.1; 6 B.1; 18 B.1;
49 B.2; 19 B.1; 66 B.2; 31 B.2;
27 B.1; 110 B.1; 2 B.2; 3 B.2;
28 B.2; 102 B.2;

(11) The Last Judgment.

62 B.2; 65 B.1; 107 B.2; 45 B.1.

(12) Heaven and Hell.

44 B.2; 105 B.1; 86 B.2;
40 B.1; 41 B.1; 33 B.2;
68 B.2; 91 B.2; 75 B.2.

It will have been noticed in the foregoing Table that almost every section of Watts' Hymn-book includes useful, and in some cases, memorable hymns.

Probably/

Probably the best of these (on a liberal computation) are:-

1 7 0 7.

BOOK 1.

Hymn	10	How beauteous are their Feet
	13	The Lands that long in darkness lay
	14	Who shall the Lord's Elect condemn
	16	Hosanna to the Royal Son
	18	Hear what the Voice from Heav'n proclaims
	26	Blest be the Everlasting God
	32	Whence do our mournful Thoughts arise
	41	These glorious Minds, how bright they shine
	48	Awake, our Souls, away, our Fears
	51	To God the only wise
	61	Now to the Lord that makes us know
	62	Come let us joyn our chearful Songs
	63	What equal Honours shall we bring
	64	Behold what wondrous Grace
	74	We are a Garden wall'd around
1 7 0 9.	79	God of the Morning, at whose Voice
	80	Thus far the Lord has led me on
	81	My God, how wondrous is thy Love
	95	Not all the outward Forms on Earth
	103	I'm not asham'd to own my Lord
	105	Nor Eye has seen, nor Ear has heard
	106	Shall we go on to sin
	108	Not with our mortal Eyes
	109	No more, my God, I boast no more
	116	Thus saith the first, the great Command
	127	Come hither, all ye weary Souls
	132	So let our Lips and Lives express
	135	Come, dearest Lord, descend and dwell
	148	With cheerful Voice I sing
	149	Join all the Names of Love and Power
	150	Join all the glorious Names.

1 7 0 7.

BOOK 2.

Hymn	6	Once more, my Soul, the rising Day
	7	Dread Sovereign, let my Evening Song
	8	Hosanna, with a cheerful Sound
	9	Alas! and did my Saviour bleed
	14	Welcome, sweet Day of Rest
	30	Come, we that love the Lord
	34	Come, Sacred Spirit, heavenly Dove
	43	Now for a Tune of lofty Praise
	54/	

- Hymn 54 My God, the Spring of all my Joys
 65 When I can read my Title clear
 66 There is a Land of pure Delight
 69 Begin, my Tongue, some heavenly Theme
 72 Blest Morning, whose young dawning Rays
 76 Hosanna to the Prince of Light
 77 Stand up, my Soul, shake off thy Fears
 79 Plung'd in a Gulph (sic) of dark Despair
 82 Arise, my Soul, my joyful Powers
 84 Come, all harmonious Tongues
 87 How wondrous great, how glorious bright
 88 Salvation! O the joyful Sound
 89 Hosanna to our conquering King
 93 My God, my Life, my Love
 95 Infinite Grief! amazing Woe
 100 When earthly Cares engross the Day (vv.4 and 5)
 104 Raise your triumphant Songs
 1709 114 I sing my Saviour's wondrous Death
 122 My God, permit me not to be
 139 My dear Redeemer and my Lord
 140 Give me the Wings of Faith to rise
 142 Not all the Blood of Beasts
 145 I love the Windows of thy Grace
 160 Let the wild Leopards of the Wood
 167 Great God, thy Glories shall employ
 168 Jehovah reigns, his Throne is high
 169 The Lord Jehovah reigns

BOOK 3.

- 1707 Hymn 1 'Twas on that dark, that doleful Night
 2 Jesus invites his Saints
 5 Let us adore th'Eternal Word
 6 Jesus is gone above the Skies
 7 When I survey the wondrous Cross
 17 We sing th'amazing Deeds
 1709 23 Sitting around our Father's Board

The above list also illustrates what we might call the typology of the Wattsian hymn as a literary genre. (In a later chapter we deal/

deal with the liturgical patterns of Watts' hymns⁸².) Roughly speaking there are three types:

1. The metrical Paraphrase.
2. The Hymn proper.
3. The quasi-devotional Lyric.

1. Watts' handling of the metrical Paraphrase is illustrated by Hymns 10, 13, 14, 18, 26, 32, 41, 62, 63, 64, 95, 103, 105, 106, 108, 109, 116, 127, 132, and 134 (Book 1); and by Hymn 160 (Book 2); and by Hymn 1 (Book 3). But even in this type of composition he allows himself greater freedom than his predecessors. This type shades imperceptibly into type 2.

2. The Hymn proper is illustrated by Hymns 48, 51, 74, 79, 80, 81, 135, 148, 149, 150 (in Book 1, which Watts offers as a collection of Scripture Paraphrases); and by Hymns 6, 7, 8, 14, 30, 34, 43, 54, 65, 66, 69, 72, 76, 77, 79, 82, 84, 87, 88, 89, 104, 114, 139, 140, 142, 167, 168, 169, (Book 2); and Hymns 2, 5, 6, 7, 17, 23 (Book 3). Some of these hymns have affiliations, in part at least, with the third type - the quasi-lyric. Cf. Hymns 9, 54, 65 (last verse) in Book 2; and Hymn 7 (v.4) in Book 3. Quite a number of the Hymns in the group on Canticles (Book 1, 66-78), are on the border-line between the lyric and the hymn.

3. The quasi-devotional Lyric is illustrated by Hymns 93, 95, 100 (vv.4,5), 122, 145 (in Book 2). Although, as we have said, Watts tried to avoid this kind of writing in a Hymn-book for "vulgar Christians", and removed many hybrid pieces of this sort to the two editions/

editions of Horae, the poetical would out even in the most austere of the paraphrases; and some few entire hymns and a good number of verses would be better placed in a collection of Christian lyrics.

Thus Watts' work grades from the fairly close paraphrase to the highly individualistic Christian lyric. But his best work as a hymnist would seem to lie between these two extremes. There is a markedly imitative element in all Watts' work,²³ and he achieves most as a writer of hymns when his thoughts are rooted in the words and images of the Bible, and spring forth from contemplating the "amazing deeds" of Divine Grace.²⁴ His weakest efforts as a hymn-writer result from his breaking the Scripture reins and losing his way in a semi-mystical morass. Fortunately for the future of modern English hymnody, its father and pioneer was a student and lover of the Bible, and rarely strayed altogether from its tutelage and inspiration. Some of the Paraphrases, later adopted by the Church of Scotland as a supplement to its Psalmody (and in some cases polished and improved by it), are amongst Watts' best work in pioneer English hymnody.²⁵

IV.

Something has been said about Watts' craftsmanship and sense of structure as a Christian Psalmist.²⁶ The Hymns and Spiritual Songs again reveal the master craftsman at work, experimenting with verbal and prosodic devices until he has the perfect stanza, and then weaving the verses into a hymn of logical strength and/

and singable size. The student of the Hymns soon learns that the few compositions that come near to Watts' ideal of being all "meridian light and meridian fervour" were not achieved on the spur of the inspired moment, but were often more perfected forms of hymns he had forged on the anvil of his mind years before. Watts undoubtedly possessed genius of the inspirational kind, but he also had that other kind of genius, which has been defined as "an infinite capacity for taking pains". He never grew tired of re-writing, re-fashioning his verses, until he attained a more satisfying hymn. For example, this verse and its sentiment,

Now for the Love I bear his Name,
What was my Gain I count my Loss:
My former Pride I call my Shame,
And nail my Glory to his Cross.

(Book 1, Hymn 109, v.2)

appeared in a more perfect form in his greatest hymn of the Redeemer's praise, "When I survey the wondrous Cross", (Book 3, Hymn 7)²⁷

Watts achieves unity and compactness in his hymn stanza by the use of two devices - sometimes combined - the cumulative and repetitive use of words.

The former device is very common in Hymns and Spiritual Songs. By its means Watts piles up diverse ideas or images in the first lines of a verse, and then resolves the heterogeneity into unity by the thought expressed in the last line or couplet:

Such/

Such was thy Truth, and such thy Zeal,
Such Deference to thy Father's Will,
Such Love and Meekness so divine,
I would transcribe, and make them mine.

(Book 2, 139 v.2)

Nor Dens of prey nor flow'ry Plains,
Nor earthly Joys nor earthly Pains,
Shall hold my Feet or force my Stay
When Christ invites my Soul away.

(Book 1, 73 lines 25-28)

Not all the outward Forms on Earth,
Nor Rites that God has giv'n,
Nor will of Man, nor Blood nor Birth,
Can raise a Soul to Heav'n.

(Book 1, 95 v.1)

Nor Earth, nor Seas, nor Sun, nor Stars,
Nor Heav'n his full Resemblance bears;
His Beauties we can never trace
Till we behold him Face to Face.

(Book 1, 146 v.13)

In some of the above examples the repetitive use of words is adopted too. Verbal repetition alone is a very common method of knitting the stanzas into a compact unity:

Till God diffuse his Graces down
Like Show'rs of heav'nly Rain,
In vain Apollos sows the Ground,
And Paul may plant in vain.

(Book 1, 119 v.4)

Where should the dying Members rest,
But with their dying Head.

(Book 2, 3 v.4 lines 3-4)

Cold/

Cold Mountains and the Midnight Air
 Witness'd the Fervour of thy Pray'r;
 The Desert thy Temptations knew,
 Thy Conflict and thy Vict'ry too.

(Book 2, 139 v.3)

He bids the Sun forbear to rise;
 Th'obedient Sun forbears;
 His Hand with Sackcloth spreads the Skies,
 And seals up all the Stars.

(Book 1, 86 v.5)

Cf. also Psalms 77, 1st Pt. Lines 23-24, 25-26, 31-32, 33-36;
 77, 2nd Pt. Lines 9-12, 21-22;
 89, 2nd Pt. Lines 13-16;
 90, lines 5-8;
 105, lines 37-40.

But this repetitive device is not always successful. Sometimes it results in crudities and banalities such as these:

He spoke and straight our Hearts and Brains
 In all their Motions rose:
 Let Blood, said he, flow round the Veins,
 And round the Veins it flows.

(Book 2, 19 v.5)

Ten thousand Praises to the King,
 Hosanna to the High'st!
 Ten thousand Thanks our Spirits bring
 To God and to his Christ.

(Book 2, 37 v.6)

Even one of the greatest of Watts' hymns, "Begin, my Tongue, some Heavenly Theme" (Book 2, 69) in its original form is marred by this repetitive device badly managed in verse 7:

He said, Let the wide Heav'n be spread,
 And Heav'n was stretch'd abroad;
 Abra'm I'll be thy God, he said,
 And he was Abra'm's God.

This/

This repetitive method extended through an entire hymn and handled with restraint is illustrated in such compositions as "How beauteous are their Feet" (Book 1, 10). Notice the skilful unobtrusive use of "how", threading the stanzas together. In "Had I the Tongues of Greeks and Jews (Book 1, 134), the personal pronoun is used in the same way. In "My dear Redeemer and my Lord" (Book 2, 139), the same method is adopted in the use of the pronoun "thy".

Sometimes, as in his Imitation of the Psalms,²⁸ Watts uses the method of repeating a line or a verse. Notice hymn 34, Book 2, and hymn 62, Book 1, where the expression "join" is used in slightly different senses in the first and last verses.

In addition to these two common methods of achieving unity of structure in the hymns, Watts adopts as we have seen above,²⁹ stylistic devices of alliteration and assonance. Notice, for example, how by the use of these he produces one of his most memorable verses:

O! could we make our Doubts remove,
Those gloomy Doubts that rise,
And see the Canaan that we love
With unbecclouded Eyes!

(Book 2, 66 v.5)

A careful examination of this hymn - perhaps the best judged as literature that Watts wrote - will show that the writer superimposed upon its unity of thought and feeling another unity discernible to the eye and perceptible to the ear, by the skilful interlocking of line with line, stanza with stanza by means of alliterative and other/

other literary devices. The method was by no means confined to this great hymn: it will be found to be a contributory factor in those hymns that have achieved greatness.

V.

With the appearance in 1719 of The Psalms of David Imitated Watts' significant contribution to English hymnology had been made; and nothing new was to be added by his spasmodic attempts at hymn-writing after that date.³⁰ The "sermonic" hymns included in his three volumes of Sermons 1721, 1723, and 1729 - a species of hymnody which Philip Doddridge adopted as his own - can hardly be said to constitute a new genre. A considerable number of the items in Hymns and Spiritual Songs, especially in the first book, appear to us to have been written to aid the memory^{to} recall the teaching of religious discourse.

Of the thirty-nine sermonic hymns published between 1721 and 1729 six were used in 1786 and fourteen in 1793, to help to fill the gaps in Hymns and Spiritual Songs, which had existed ever since 1709, when Watts withdrew a group of fourteen Psalm versions from the second edition.³¹

The hymns so incorporated in 1786 were:

Shall Atheists dare insult the Cross
What shall the dying Sinner do
Not by the Laws of Innocence
Jesus, thy Blessings are not few
How is our Nature spoil'd by Sin
O happy Soul, that lives on high

And/

And the group of sermonic hymns added to the Psalms and Hymns in 1793 was as follows:

Questions and Doubts be heard no more
 What vain Desires and Passions vain
 Must all the Charms of Nature then
 O happy Soul, that lives on high
 What shall the dying Sinner do
 Jesus, thy Blessings are not few
 Let those who bear the Christian Name
 O 'tis a lovely Thing to see
 Do I believe what Jesus saith
 Blessed Redeemer, how divine
 How vast the Treasure we possess
 And is this Life prolong'd to me
 Awake my Zeal, awake by Love
 Must Friends and Kindred drop and die

John Rippon in his An Arrangement of the Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs....., 1802, included, among others, seventeen of the sermonic hymns, namely:-

Questions and Doubts be heard no more
 What vain Desires and Passions vain
 Must all the Charms of Nature then
 O happy Soul, that lives on high
 Shall Atheists dare insult the Cross
 What shall the dying Sinner do
 Not by the Laws of Innocence
 Jesus, thy Blessings are not few
 Let those who bear the Christian Name
 O 'tis a lovely Thing to see
 Do I believe what Jesus saith
 Blessed Redeemer, how divine
 How is our Nature spoil'd by Sin
 How vast the Treasure we possess
 And is this Life prolong'd to me
 Awake my Zeal, awake my Love
 Must Friends and Kindred drop and die

Later nineteenth century hymn-books seem to have discarded some of the foregoing, retaining,

Questions/

Questions and Doubts be heard no more
 O that I knew the secret Place
 O happy Soul, that lives on high
 What shall the dying Sinner do
 Do I believe what Jesus saith
 How is our Nature spoil'd by Sin
 Must Friends and Kindred drop and die

and to have added three others of the original thirty-nine:

Am I a Soldier of the Cross
 Do Flesh and Nature dread to die
 Father of Glory, to thy Name.³²

The first lines and titles of all the Sermonic Hymns will be found in the Appendix, pp. 128-131. Speaking generally, they do not reach the level of Watts' earlier work, and leave the reader with the feeling that they are machine made, which is equally the criticism of Hymns and Spiritual Songs at their flattest and most prosaic level. Probably the best of this batch of later hymns are "Questions and Doubts be heard no more" and "Am I a Soldier of the Cross".

A few more hymns were included in two later publications: Reliquiae Juveniles, 1734, and Remnants of Time, published posthumously in Watts' Collected Works, in 1753. It is highly improbable that the compositions in these books represent later hymnodic experiments. They partake rather of the hybrid character of the early hymns in Horae Lyricae, and seem, for the most part, to belong to the period of Watts' apprenticeship, which we have sketched in chapter 2. However, hymns from both these publications were used in 1786, along with the six hymns from the Sermons. and some from Horae Lyricae,³³ to fill up the gaps in Hymns and Spiritual Songs referred/

referred to above. The hymns used were:

Absent from Flesh, O blissful Thought (Reliquiae)

The mighty Frame of glorious Grace (Remnant)

John Rippon in his Arrangement, 1802, incorporated the same two pieces.

Later hymnals of the nineteenth century appear to have discarded the hymn from the Reliquiae and added two others from that book, namely,

Where shall the Tribes of Adam find

and, Unvail thy Bosom faithful Tomb

and to have retained parts of "The mighty Frame of glorious Grace".

A full list of all these hybrid hymns will be found in the Appendix, pp.132-135.

They represent no new line in content or treatment, and, with the exception of some parts of "The mighty Frame", while being historically interesting, have little hymnological worth.

NOTES

CHAPTER 7.

- 1 The Library of Congress, Washington; The New York Public Library.
- 2 The first lines and titles of the hymns as they appeared in the two editions are given in the Appendix, pp.78-100.
- 3 Milner, op. cit., p.229.
- 4 Ibid. pp.229-30
- 5 The larger treatise on Psalmody, if ever completed, was never published. The success of Watts' reform made it unnecessary.
- 6 Cf. Chapt. 5 and 6, above.
- 7 Cf. Julian, op. cit., p.414
- 8 Cf. A Mitchell Hunter, The Teaching of Calvin, p.276.
- 9 We have noticed, chapt. 5 above, that Watts' was a reactionary in the sense that he sought the returning glory of the Church's Psalmody.
- 10 Cf. Quotation from Bernard Manning's, Essays in Orthodox Dissent in Congregationalism and the Church Catholic (N. Micklem) p.10:
 "The hymns are not paraphrases, nor are they charged in every line with Scriptural content. They discuss mountain scenery (with special attention to sunsets), psychological disorders, priggish ambitions, and political programmes".

- 11 This is taken from A Song of Praise to God the Redeemer,
Book 2, Hymn 21.
- 12 Cf. Book 2, Hymn 142.
- 13 Cf. Book 1, Hymns 51, 61, 62, 63: Book 2, Hymns 29, 21, etc.
- 14 Cf. ref. to propagandist hymnody of Keach, in chapt. 3.
- 15 Cf. Henry Housman, John Ellerton. His Life and Writings on
Hymnology. p.234.
- 16 This quality of Watts' work has been mentioned several times
in the Thesis.
- 17 Cf. Chapt. 3, above.
- 18 Cf. Chapt. 3, above.
- 19 An Arrangement of the Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs, of
the Rev. Isaac Watts, D.D. Including (what no other volume
contains) All his Hymns, with which the vacancies in the First
Book were filled up in 1786, and also those in 1793....., by
John Rippon, D.D., London, 1802.
- 20 Cf. note 16 above.
- 21 The reader will find the first lines and titles of all the
hymns listed here according to their numbers, in the
Appendix, pp. 78-100.
- The hymns underlined are, in our opinion, the best in the sections.
- 22 Cf. Chapt. 9, below.
- 23 Cf. Chapt. 3 above and Chapt. 9 below.
- 24 This applies particularly to the hymns on the Christus Victor
theme, which are mentioned in Chapt. 2 and 9 of the Thesis.
- 25/

- ²⁵ Cf. Douglas J. MacLagan, The Scottish Paraphrases..., 1889.
- ²⁶ Cf. Chapt. 6, above.
- ²⁷ Cf. also Book 2, Hymns 59, v.9, and 66 v.2.
- ²⁸ Cf. Chapt. 6, above.
- ²⁹ Cf. Chapt. 6, above.
- ³⁰ Cf. Chapt. 1, above.
- ³¹ Cf. Chapt. 6, where these are given in facsimile.
- ³² Cf. Julian, op. cit., 1241.
- ³³ Cf. Chapt. 2, above for a list of these hymns.

M

DIVINE SONGS

Attempted in Easy Lan-
guage for the Use of
CHILDREN.

By I. WATTS.

*Out of the Mouth of Babies and
Sucklings thou hast perfected
Praise. Matt. xxi. 16.*

LONDON:

Printed for M. Lawrence at the Angel
in the Psaltry. 1715.

THE WILLIAMS' LIBRARY
LONDON.

TITLE-PAGE, FIRST EDITION, 1715

CHAPTER 8CHILDREN'S SONGS AND PRAISES.

Only in recent years has the contribution of English Puritanism to education been recognised and duly assessed. Something has been said of the part played by the Dissenting Academies in the cultural and religious life of England in the late seventeenth century.¹ It should be added that it was the Puritan Cromwell who reorganised University education and encouraged men of learning of all opinions, and his brother-in-law John Wilkins gathered together the group which ultimately formed the Royal Society.²

The purpose of education, as the Puritan conceived it, is well expressed by Milton:

"The end...to learning is to repair the ruin of our first parents, by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love Him, to imitate Him, to be like Him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue".

The roots of Puritan education were always moral and religious. Before there was anything like universal schooling in England, even in the rudiments of learning, preachers and versifiers brought their precepts into the homes of the people. Tracts by Milton and Baxter/

Baxter, and sermons by leading divines formed the staple of their education. Though the poetry of Herbert, Quarles, Vaughan and Herrick belong to this age, it is doubtful if any of these found their way into the homes of serious minded folk. The Bible, the Singing Psalms, versified versions of the Song of Songs - these were thought sufficient, even in many wealthy Puritan homes, to meet the aesthetic and literary requirements of the young.

It is not commonly known that a few children's books of wide influence, written by puritans in the seventeenth century, were in aim and content the precursors of Isaac Watts' Divine Songs for Children.

I

Before we examine these and assess Watts' work in the light of them, we must look at the two main attitudes to childhood in the century. First, there was the romantic attitude, which is pictorially set forth in John Earle's 'character' of a child in Microcosmographie (1628):

"A Child is a Man in a small letter, yet the best Copie of Adam before he tasted of Eve, or the Apple.....
 He is nature's fresh picture newly drawne in Oyle, which time and much handling dimmes and defaces.....
 His father hath writ him as his own little story, wherein he reades those dayes of his life that he cannot remember; and sighes to see what innocence he has out-lived. The elder he growes, he is a stayre lower from God; and like his first father, much worse in breeches. He is the Christian's example, and the old man's relapse: The one imitates his purenesse, and the other falls into his simplicitie".

This view of the child as a sort of angelic visitant, whose robes and/

and spirit are gradually but surely tainted by contact with the world, is seen frequently in seventeenth-century literature, and determined, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the philosophic and idealistic attitude to childhood which we find in poets like Wordsworth and Hood. It is seen later in Keble's Lyra Innocentium, (1846).

Francis Bacon, in his essay Of Youth and Age, quoted Jewish authority for the view that youth has stronger powers of spiritual insight, depending upon a closer walk with God:

"A certain rabbin, upon the text, Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams, inferreth that young men are admitted nearer to God than old, because vision is a clearer revelation than a dream; and certainly, the more a man drinketh of the world the more it intoxicateth".

Henry Vaughan idealised childhood in this way in poems like The Retreate, Childhood and Looking back. His brother, Thomas Vaughan, observes in his Euphrates, or the Waters of the East (1655):

"This Consideration on my self, when I was a Child, hath made me examine Children, namely, what thoughts they had of these Elements, we see about us, and I found thus much by them, that Nature in her simplicity, is much more wise, than some men are with their acquired parts, and Sophistrie..... A Child I suppose, in puris Naturalibus, before education alters and ferments him, is a Subject hath not been much consider'd, for men respect him not till he is companie for them, and then indeed they spoile him".

The same ideas are found in Thomas Traherne. In the third of the Meditations, and in several of the poems we are told that man's vision of God was originally a birthright. Traherne recalls the vivid apprehensions of his own infancy, and regards each child as Adam in Eden./

Eden. He lays much greater stress upon this idea than the Vaughans did, and makes it the foundation of his philosophic system. Man must re-win "an infant eye" or, better still, never lose it. Many of the poems deal with that theme, of which Wonder, and The Preparative are perhaps the most successful.

Possibly some of the above ideas associated with childhood entered seventeenth-century poetry and mysticism from Jacob Boehme, whose works were translated into English during the fifth and sixth decades of the century. Boehme often recommends seekers of divine truth to cultivate the childlike spirit, and compares the Angels to

"little children, which walk in the fields in May,
among the flowers, and pluck them, and make curious
Garlands, and Poseys, carrying them in their hands
rejoycing....."

In The Threefold Life of Man (translated 1650), he says:

"Little Children are our Schoolmasters till evill
stirrs in them, and so they embrace the Turba Magna,
but they bring their sport from the Mother's wombe,
which is a Remnant of Paradise: but all the rest is
gone till we receive it againe." p.191.

Lastly, Luther in The Table Talk seems to lean towards this romantic view of the child:

"Consider the bodies of children, how much sweeter
and purer and more beautiful they are than those of
grown persons; 'tis because childhood approaches
nearer to the state of innocence wherein Adam lived
before his fall".³

But this romantic view of childhood cannot be said to have issued in any practical interest in education. It was purely a philosophic concept, very useful to the poet, because of its imaginative possibilities./

possibilities.

The second attitude to childhood - the Puritan attitude - in contradistinction, was popular and intensely practical. Its source is found in Calvin's Institutes:

".....Infants themselves bring their owne damnation with them from their mother's wombe. Who, although they have not yet brought forth the fruits of their iniquitie, yet have the seed thereof inclosed within them. Yea, their whole nature is a certaine seed of sinne, therefore it cannot but bee hatefull and abominable to God".⁴

On very rare occasions, within the Church, this forthright criticism of childhood clashed with the romantic view of the child's innocence and purity. Witness, in illustration, Jeremy Taylor's protest in Unum Necessarium (1655):

".....it is hard upon such mean accounts to reckon all children to be born enemies of God....full of sin and vile corruption, when the Holy Scriptures propound children as imitable for their pretty innocence and sweetness, and declare them rather heirs of heaven than hell".

But there were few voices in the seventeenth-century church with the gentler cadence of Taylor's. For the most part, the Puritan view of childhood prevailed and pervaded social life. As Milton says,

".....we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather: that which purifies us is triall, and triall is by what is contrary. That vertue therefore which is not a youngling in the contemplation of evill....is but a blank vertue, not a pure".⁵

This puritan attitude was vastly different from the idyllic one of men like Earle, Vaughan, Traherne and Boehme. The child is now no longer "a stayre nearer God", or a little one of the Church with the dew of baptism still glistening on its brow, and with its little white/

white robe scarcely stained. Even from his infancy man is a lost and ruined creature - to be saved from an infinite horrible eternal fate. The child does not come into life trailing clouds of glory, but as a miserable little sinner full of original sin, and surrounded by snares and pitfalls from which escape is desperately difficult. Under these perilous circumstances a parent dare not indulge a child whom he loves. The sparing of the rod may land the little one in the bottomless pit for ever and ever. Let the parent, therefore, beware of cleverness, or beauty in his child. Let the spirit of cleverness be broken lest the devil use it. Let gracefulness and beauty be hidden, for ^{fear} they become snares of the Wicked One.

There is a positive and negative side of this puritan attitude to the child. Negatively, it is critical of secular literature in the child's early training:

"As for play-books and romances and idle tales...how pernicious they are...They are powerful baits of the devil, to keep more necessary things out of their minds, and better books out of their hands..."

Thus writes Richard Baxter.⁶ John Norris advises his children,

"As for Plays and Romances, I would have you wholly decline the use of them. For that's...(to bring) the World into your Closet".⁷

The positive content of this puritan attitude shows itself in the appearance of a little army of "Good Godly Books", armed and arrayed to do battle with the Wicked One who is trying by every artifice imaginable to destroy the castle of the child's soul. These godly books of seventeenth-century puritanism were devised and written on the plain dogmatic belief that a definitely revealed heaven and hell existed on every edge of this mortal life, and that conduct/

conduct here on earth leads irrevocably, but for God's mercy, to the one or the other.⁸ Their authors wrote that children might be saved from the eternal torments of hell, with the implication that the process of salvation was an extremely difficult one.

The majority of these books for or about children, were written and published after the Act of Uniformity, 1662, most of them from the propagandist motive mentioned in chapter 3, of teaching the sterner Calvinist theology in the face of the milder doctrine appearing in the English Church. That this was the case is illustrated by the frontispiece to Benjamin Keach's War with the Devil, 1673. It represents "the youth in his converted state aetat. su.16" on the narrow way, dressed in a stage-puritan costume, being shot at by devils and enemies with guns. Opposite the youth is displayed again in full Cavalier dress going down the broad road to a flaming lake.

The books that were ostensibly written for children have as a rule, so strong a didactic and religious bias that they seem not to be children's books at all. All of them have one thing in common - the belief that the best manner to bring up a child in the way he should go was to frighten him into religion. In this sense these "godly books" of seventeenth-century puritanism determined the spirit of the majority of English children's religious books for at least a century and a half.

The most influential authors of this kind of children's literature in the century were Thomas White, Benjamin Keach, Abraham Chear, John Bunyan, and James Janeway.

Little/

Little is known of White. He was one of the ejected ministers, who died in 1672. His Little Book for Little Children (12th ed., 1703), was very widely read. Keach's War with the Devil, 1673, has been mentioned. Abraham Chear's oft-quoted lines,

'Tis pity, such a pretty Maid
As I should go to Hell,

appeared in A Looking-Glass for Children (2nd ed., 1673).

Early editions of these books are hard to come by: when children love their books, they invariably love them to pieces. But for the study of Watts' later contribution to children's verse and worship, only two of these writers concern us - Bunyan and Janeway, and fortunately, we have been able to trace early editions of their work.⁹

John Bunyan's A Book for Boys and Girls¹⁰..., was published in 1686, and was never again reprinted in the author's life-time. The only known copy of the first edition is in the British Museum. In 1701, Bunyan's book reappeared as A Book for Boys and Girls; or, Temporal Things Spiritualised. The only known copy of this is in the Bodleian Library. This edition contained only forty-nine of the original seventy-four pieces, and the language has undergone a process of modernisation. In 1724, the 9th edition was published which bore, for the first time, the title which the book has ever since retained: Divine Emblems; or, Temporal Things Spiritualised. In 1757, a 10th edition was published. Other editions appeared in 1780, 1790, 1793, 1802 and 1806.

The/

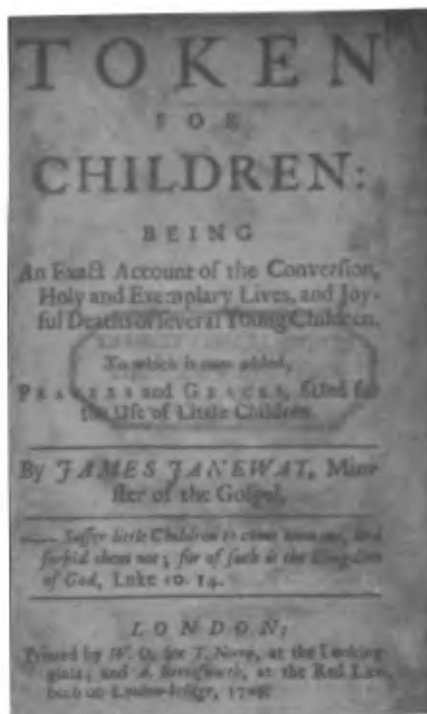
The original 1686 edition begins with a Poetical Address to the Reader, in which Bunyan expresses his purpose:

".....by their Play things, I would them entice,
To mount their Thoughts from what are childish Toys,
To Heav'n, for that's prepar'd for Girls and Boys, etc."

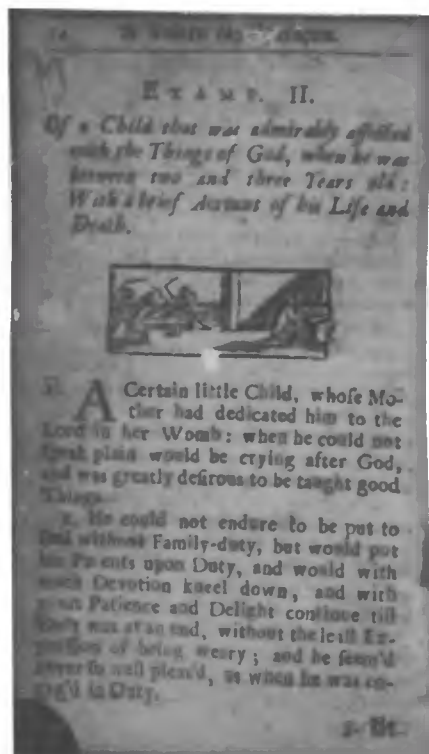
Then follows a curious little substitute for a horn-book entitled An Help to Children to learn to read English, and a list of Christian names, "to learn Children to spell aright their names", together with lists of figures roman and arabic to prepare them to read the Metrical Psalter and the Bible. The book has seventy-four pieces. Numbers thirty-one and thirty-three have staves of music given to which they were intended to be sung. The clef in both cases is obsolete now, being printed in the shape in which it is found in Christopher Simpson's Compendium of Practical Musick, 1678.¹¹

More influential than Bunyan's book in puritan homes was James Janeway's A Token for Children; being An Exact Account of the Conversion, Holy and Exemplary Lives, and Joyful Deaths of several Young Children. This had a very great vogue in Britain and America between 1670 and 1720. In both countries it passed through edition after edition, "and was the certain means of saving many infants from Hell and damnation".¹² Cotton Mather, the friend of Watts, wrote a continuation of it, to show that New England children were no less adept at the fashionable art of dying than their little contemporaries in the mother country. The book was read fairly widely in evangelical circles in England and Scotland in the middle of last century.¹³

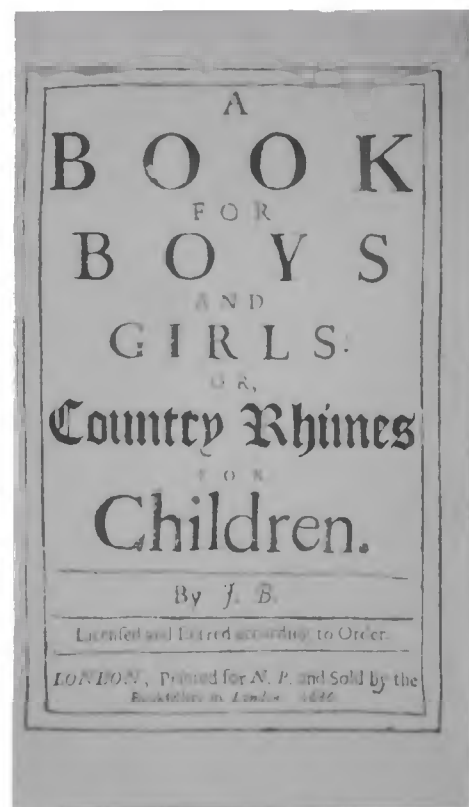
Janeway/



(I)



(II)



(III)

PURITAN GODLY BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

Janeway regards children as "brands of Hell". They must be saved at all costs, because "Hell is a terrible place, that's worse a thousand times than whipping". But if children reach Heaven, "they shall never be beat any more. They shall never be sick or in pain any more". The book is adorned with cuts. A child is shown praying for its parent. Three little creatures are whipping a top (a grave crime often reprimanded, the whirling top being a notable Emblem)¹⁴, while a good child prays (fig.(11) opposite). In another illustration a child thoughtfully but without terror, is looking at a corpse. The memento mori motif of seventeenth-century devotion is markedly in evidence. Janeway is concerned with the "joyful Deaths" of his godly little children. Death to the Puritan, as to the religious of Mediaeval times,¹⁵ was an important personal crisis in which the believer's faith was finally tested, and the destiny of the soul settledⁱⁿ a decisive conflict with the powers of evil. Janeway's method of moral and religious instruction is to offer a series of pictures of good children who lived godly lives and died triumphantly and joyfully. The book is nauseating to a modern reader, particularly if he have any knowledge of child psychology. Janeway's "good children" have the most morbid and unchildlike ideas. One of them was "admirably affected with the things of God when he was between two and three years old; another baby of two appeared "savingsly to understand the mysteries of redemption"; while a third was "a dear lover of faithful ministers", and tried to induce its friends "to get Christ for their souls". The words of one/

The words of one of the children "were so wise and weighty and might well become some ancient Christian"; while another poor little creature "had such extraordinary meltings that his eyes were red and sore with weeping for his sin".¹⁶ Janeway's Token, like Watts' Divine Songs, has a preface addressed "To all Parents, School-Masters and School-Mistresses or any that have any hand in the Education of Children". In this he asks:

"Are the Souls of your Children of no Value? Are you willing that they should be Brands of Hell? Are you indifferent whether they be Damned or Saved? Shall the Devil run away with them without controul (sic)? Will not you use your utmost Endeavour to deliver them from the Wrath to come..., they are not too little to die, they are not too little to go to Hell, they are not too little to serve their great Master, too little to go to Heaven.....," etc.

We have been at great pains to outline the twofold attitude to child-life in the seventeenth century, bringing out in bolder relief the puritan idea of the child, because, apart from this historical and psychological background, one cannot judiciously assess the work of Watts in the field of children's verse and hymnody. His Divine Songs have come in for an unfair share of criticism just because they have been judged too often, not in the dim light of the age in which they were composed, but by the brighter light of our more humane and less sadistic times, at least, so far as child-life is concerned.

II.

Watts' book of verse for children was published in 1715 with the title Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children. The original edition has a "Dedicatory Epistle" to the daughters of Sir Thomas Abney, which was omitted from subsequent editions. We have printed this, partly in facsimile, in the Appendix, pp. 45-47. The book has also a "Preface To all that are concerned in the Education of Children" after the manner of Janeway's introduction to the Token. This we have also placed for reference in the Appendix, pp. 48-51. Watts' preface, with slight alterations, appeared in most later issues of Divine Songs. At the end of the text of the Songs (p.45) there is a new title page, A Slight Specimen of Moral Songs, etc. (cf. Appendix, p. 52).

The items in the first edition are as follows:-¹⁷

- 1 A General Song of Praise to God.
- 2 Praise for Creation and Providence.
- 3 Praise to God for our Redemption.
- 4 Praise for Mercies Spiritual and Temporal.
- 5 Praise for Birth and Education in a Christian Land.
- 6 Praise for the Gospel.
- 7 The Excellency of the Bible.
- 8 Praise to God for learning to read.
- 9 The All-seeing God.
- 10 Solemn Thoughts of God and Death.
- 11 Heaven and Hell.
- 12 The Advantages of early Religion.
- 13 The Danger of Delay.
- 14 Examples of early Piety.
- 15 Against Lying.
- 16 Against Quarrelling and Fighting.
- 17 Love between Brothers and Sisters.
- 18 Against scoffing and calling Names.
- 19 Against Swearing and Cursing, and taking God's Name
in vain.

20. Against Idleness and Mischief.
21. Against evil Company.
22. Against Pride in Clothes.
23. Obedience to Parents.
24. The Child's Complaint.
25. A Morning Song.
26. An Evening Song.
27. For the Lord's Day Morning.
28. For the Lord's Day Evening.

The Ten Commandments out of the Old Testament put into short Rhime for Children. Exod. 20.

The Sum of the Commandments out of the New Testament. Matt. 22, 37.

Our Saviour's Golden Rule. Matt. 7, 12.

Duty to God and our Neighbour.

Out of my Book of Hymns I have here added, The Hosanna and Glory to the Father, etc. to be sung at the end of any of these Songs, according to the Direction of Parents or Governors.

The Hosanna; or Salvation ascribed to Christ. Long Metre.

Do.

Do.

Common Metre.

"

"

Short Metre.

Glory to the Father and the Son, etc.

Long Metre.

Do.

Do.

Common Metre.

"

"

Short Metre.

A Slight Specimen of Moral Songs:

The Sluggard.

Innocent Play

The book, as these titles suggest, has more than one design. It is at one and the same time a metricised catechism, an anthology of religious poems for children, a series of moral lessons in verse, and a small collection of children's hymns. Some light is thrown on the reason for this heterogeneity of content in both the Dedication and the Preface. It would appear from the former that some of the hymns were written for the Abney children, who had shown much fondness for the adult praise in Hymns and Spiritual Songs. The hymns in/

in Divine Songs, however, were not written for Church use, but for private meditation and family worship, to offset the appeal (as in Horae Lyricae) "of loose and dangerous Sonnets of the Age".¹⁸ The batch of verses on Christian ethics and the small group of metrical passages of Scripture probably constitute that part of the book which Watts tells us "was composed several Years ago, at the request of a Friend, who has been long engaged in the Work of Catechising a very great Number of Children of all kinds...."¹⁹

Lastly, The Slight Specimen of Moral Songs, represented in the first edition by two items only, The Sluggard and Innocent Play, seems to adumbrate Watts' new design, inimical to puritan precedent, namely, to humanise children's verse by emptying it of the "Solemnities of Religion", and making it more a thing of "Delight and Profit together".²⁰ Here again emerges the purpose of Horae Lyricae:

"This would be one effectual way to deliver (children) from the Temptation of Loving or Learning those Idle, Wanton, or Profane Songs, which give so early an ill Taint to the Fancy and Memory, and become the Seeds of future Vices".²¹

III.

We propose now to go through the contents of Divine Songs, showing what features it derived from the puritan godly books, and from other sources; suggesting finally where its supremacy and originality lie, and how its nucleus of children's praises, while probably never used in church worship, 'provoked' an interest in the children's hymn.

Watts' preface seems to be based on Janeway's to the Token. Both have/

have the same aim, though Watts is more gentle, tolerant and persuasive.

A considerable number of the Songs are really nothing else but versified puritan moral teaching (but excellent versification).²² They remind us over and over again of passages in Janeway's Token. For example, Song IV. Praise for Mercies Spiritual and Temporal, which begins,

Whene'er I take my Walks abroad,
How many Poor I see?
What shall I render to my God
For all his Gifts to me?

recalls this passage in a Token for Children, Pt. 1, example 4:

"She would be oftentimes admiring God's Mercy
for such Goodness to her rather than to others;
that she saw some begging, others blind some
crooked, and that she wanted nothing that was
good for her"

Song VII. The Excellency of the Bible, and Song VIII. Praise to God for learning to read, remind us again of Janeway's Token, Pt 1, pp.3, 18, 22, 25.

Song X. Solemn Thoughts of God and Death is paralleled in most puritan preaching on memento mori. Stanza 4, which runs:

There is an Hour when I must die,
Nor do I know how soon 'twill come;
A thousand Children young as I
Are call'd by Death to hear their Doom,

is reminiscent of a passage in Janeway's Preface, and so is Song XIII. The Danger of Delay.

In Song XIV. Examples of early Piety, Watts undoubtedly had in mind/

mind Janeway's Token, with its Examples of holy Children. But Watts wisely found his examples of virtue and godliness in the Bible: he knew very probably that the veracity of some of Janeway's pictures of early piety had been questioned.²³

Song XV. Against Lying, reflects the attitude of puritan preaching to this, not surprisingly, common sin of seventeenth-century childhood. See Janeway's Token Pt 1, p.4: "She abhorred Lying, and allowed herself in no Sin", and p.17: "He abhorred Lying, with his Soul, etc."

Song XIX. Against Swearing and Cursing and taking God's Name in vain, deals with a theme common in puritan teaching:

"He was very fearful of wicked Company, and would oft beg of God to keep him from it, and that he might never be pleased in them that took delight in displeasing of God: And when he was at any time in the hearing of their wicked Words, taking the Lord's Name in vain, or swearing, or any filthy Words, it would even make him tremble, and ready to go home and weep".²⁴

Song XX. Against Idleness and Mischief, again reflects puritan ideas on these anti-social qualities:

"She was very Conscientious in spending of Time, and hated Idleness, and spent her whole Time either in Praying, Reading, or Instructing at her Needle.."²⁵

"When he was left at home alone upon the Sabbath Days, he would be sure not to spend any Part of the Day in Idleness and Play, but he busied in praying, reading the Bible, and getting his Catechism".²⁶

Song XXII. Against Pride in Clothes, expresses the attitude of the Puritan to dress. Some of its verses are almost a metrical paraphrase of a passage from Janeway:

"He/

"He was very Humble and Modest, and did by no means affect Fineness in Apparel, but hated any thing more than Necessaries either in Cloaths or Diet.

When he perceived either his Brother or Sister pleased with their new Cloaths, he would, with a great deal of Gravity, reprove their Folly, and when his Reproof signified little, he would bewail their Vanity.

One he had a new Suit brought from the Taylor's, which, when he looked on, he found some Ribbons at the knees, at which he was grieved; asking his Mother, Whether those Things would keep him warm? No, Child, said his Mother: Why then, said he, do you suffer them to be put here? you are mistaken, if you think such Things please me: and I doubt, some that are better than us, may want the Money that this cost you, to buy them Bread.... He did tell them of the Danger of Pride, and how little Reason they had to be proud of that which was their Shame; for, said he, if it had not been for Sin, we should have had no need of Cloaths".²⁷

Watts' Song on this theme might owe something also to Herrick's poem, Cloaths for Continuance, which runs:

Those garments lasting evermore,
Are works of mercy to the poore,
Which neither tetter, time or moth
Shall fray that silks, or fret this cloth.²⁸

The influence of Janeway's Token is traceable again in Song XXIII.

Obedience to Parents (cf. Token, p.29), and Song XXIV. The Child's Complaint, which recalls the passage in the Token, p.16, beginning:

"He kept a Watch over his Heart, and observed the
Workings of his Soul, and would complain, that
they were so vain and foolish, etc."

In several of the Songs already mentioned may be traced also the influence of Bunyan's Book for Boys and Girls. We have noticed that two pieces in Bunyan's book were accompanied by music: it was very probably Bunyan who gave to Watts the idea of a volume of sung-verses for children. Watts' Songs which show the influence of Bunyan, so far as their content is concerned, are:-

Song/

Song XV. Against Lying. Cf. Bunyan's The awakened Child's Lamentation. v.16.

Song XX. Against Idleness and Mischief. "How doth the little busy Bee". Cf. Bunyan's Upon the Bee. But notice that Bunyan regards the Bee as the emblem of Sin; Watts as a symbol of Christian industry.²⁹

Cf. also Bunyan's The awakened Child's Lamentation, v.9. for the Calvinist stress on industry in prayer as in work:

When other Children prayed,
That work I then delayed,
Ran up and down and played,
And thus from God have strayed.

Song XXII. Against Pride in Cloathes, reminds us of two poems by Bunyan on the same theme: Upon over-much Niceness (No.12) and Upon Apparel (No.16)

Song XXIII. Obedience to Parents is paralleled in Bunyan's volume with Upon the Disobedient Child (No.66).

Bunyan, before Watts, had offered a metrical rendering of the Ten Commandments to assist the memory of children.

Watts' Moral Songs also reveal the influence of Bunyan, mainly in those added to later editions of the Divine Songs.³⁰ For example,

Song III. The Rose reflects Bunyan's Of Beauty (No.74).

Song IV. The Thief reminds us of Bunyan's Upon the Thief (No.30).

Watts' 5th Song. The Ant, or Emmet recalls Bunyan's 38th, Upon the Pismire, which again might have influenced Watts' well-known Song, The Sluggard - perhaps the first of his experiments in moral verse for children. Bunyan's verses read:

"Must/

"Must we unto the Pis-mire go to School,
to learn of her, in Summer to provide
For Winter next ensuing; Man's a Fool,
Or silly Ants would not be made his Guide.
But Sluggard, is it not a shame for thee,
To be out-done by Pismires? Prethee hear:
Their Works (too) will thy Condemnation be,
When at the Judgment Seat thou shalt appear, etc."

Finally, Bunyan's Meditations upon day before Sun-rising (No.18) and On the rising of the Sun (No.25), might have had some influence upon Watts in his own Songs on the glory of the morning light and upon the Song, Summer's Evening, with which his book closes.

In addition to the Puritan influence, represented chiefly by Janeway and Bunyan, and the occasional influence of seventeenth-century religious poetry,³¹ Watts' work seems also to have owed something to an educational movement within Anglicanism.

We have mentioned in chapter 3 the Religious Societies and the Charity Schools which, in origin at least, were Anglican. And there is reason to believe that Watts was sympathetic toward the spirit that motivated and energised these movements which were educational in the truest sense. We learn from the preface to the Divine Songs that some of the verses were written for a friend, presumably an Anglican, who was greatly interested in the religious instruction of children and was experimenting in that work. The catechetical character of some of Watts' songs can be accounted for by this Anglican affiliation.

The Anglicans of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century appear to have led the way in the religious instruction of children. Early in the century there was published The Christian School/

School-Master: or, the Duty of those who are Employ'd in the Publick Instruction of Children; Especially in Charity Schools..., By James Talbott, D.D. (2nd ed. 1711). It is not at all unlikely that Watts, a keen educationist, knew this book and was in sympathy with its aims. We go further, and say that he re-echoes some of its passages in his Songs for Children. For example, compare Song XVI. Against Quarrelling and Fighting with Christian Schoolmaster, pp.50,59-60: Song XVII. Love between Brothers and Sisters, with the same passages in C.S.:

Song XVIII. Against Scoffing and calling Names, with C.S. p.55, particularly stanza 4,

When Children in their wanton Play
 Serv'd old Elisha so,
 And bid the Prophet go his way,
 "Go up, thou Bald-head, go",

which Biblical incident is used by Talbott as an illustration of the evil of scoffing at religion.

Compare also Song XIX. Against Swearing, etc. with C.S. p.100:

Song XX. Against Idleness and Mischief, with C.S. pp.77-8:

Song XXI. Against evil Company, with C.S. p.91.

We also think that, in some indirect way, Watts' work in the field of religious instruction of children was linked up with the Charity School Movement. As early as 1723 books of moral and religious verse, not dissimilar in some respects to Watts' Divine Songs, were being produced for the use of Charity Schools. See, for example, Copies in Verse, For the Use of Writing Schools, and Hymns/

Hymns for Charity Schools, published at Newcastle-on-Tyne, 1725.

Watts himself wrote An Essay towards the Encouragement of Charity-Schools....., which was published in 1728.

In conclusion, Watts' contribution to children's instruction and praise was largely, from the standpoint of content, derivative. Almost all his themes are paralleled in Puritan children's books, seventeenth-century devotional verse, and in some Anglican manuals of moral and religious instruction. But Watts' originality and supremacy lie in the masterly way in which he manages his versification, and in its metrical variety. We believe that Watts is more of an Augustan in this department of his work than in any other: his themes had often been thought of and preached, "but ne'er so well express'd".³² But there is also a new spirit in this verse for children. Despite its occasional Calvinistic sternness, there is manifest more than once a serene kindliness, an attempt to make religious instruction through verse, not an imposition, but a delightful, cheerful and natural pursuit of the child.

The Sorrows of the Mind
Be banish'd from the Place;
Religion never was design'd
To make our Pleasures less.³³

It would have been strange if Watts, living in an age when piety was often equated with dourness, had not sometimes transgressed his own rule. But on the whole, there is probably more pleasant piety in these divine and moral songs for children than in any other/

other department of Watts' hymnological work.

To compare Watts' book with Bunyan's is to perceive at once that a new genre of Child verse had appeared. Watts' mastery of verse-technique, which we have mentioned in chapter 1 at some length, was entirely new in popular religious verse; and was not seriously rivalled till Ann and Jane Taylor's work appeared at the beginning of the nineteenth century.³⁴

As his Hymns for adults portended the fall of Puritan literalism in Psalmody, so his children's verses and praises, though the productions of Puritan piety, indicated the end of the aggressive, persecuting frightened love of children, and the beginning of a healthier and saner attitude to the Child in the midst of the Church.

There are among the individual items of Watts' book a number of songs that are mostly new in content and wholly new in execution. These are his children's praises, written to be sung in private or in the family circle, but constituting the germinal source of our modern children's hymnody in the Church. Of these the following are the best:-³⁵

Song I. A General Song of Praise to God. beginning,

How glorious is our heavenly King,
Who reigns above the Sky!,
How shall a Child presume to sing
His dreadful Majesty?

Song II/

Song II. Praise for Creation and Providence, which entered adult hymnody, and which begins,

I Sing th'Almighty Power of God,
That made the Mountains rise,
That spread the flowing Seas abroad,
And built the lofty Skies.

Song III. Praise to God for our Redemption, beginning,

Blest be the Wisdom and the Power,
The Justice and the Grace,
That join'd in Council to restore
And save our ruin'd Race.

Song V. Praise for Birth and Education in a Christian Land, which opens,

Great God, to Thee my Voice I raise,
To Thee my youngest Hours belong;
I would begin my Life with Praise,
Till growing Years improve the Song.

Song VI. Praise for the Gospel, beginning,

Lord, I ascribe it to thy Grace,
And not to Chance, as others do,
That I was born of Christian Race,
And not a Heathen, or a Jew.

Song VII. The Excellency of the Bible, which begins,

Great God, with Wonder, and with Praise,
On all thy Works I look;
But still thy Wisdom, Pow'r, and Grace,
Shine brighter in thy Book.

Song VIII. Praise to God for learning to read, opening.

The Praises of my Tongue
I offer to the Lord,
That I was taught, and learnt so young
To read his holy Word.

Song XII/

Song XII. The Advantages of early Religion, beginning,

Happy's the Child whose youngest Years
 Receive Instruction well;
 Who hates the Sinner's Path, and fears
 The Road that leads to Hell.

Song XXV. A Morning Song, beginning,

My God, who mak'st the Sun to know
 His proper Hour to rise,
 And to give Light to all below
 Dost send him round the Skies.

Song XXVI. An Evening Song, beginning,

And now another Day is gone,
 I'll sing my Maker's Praise;
 My Comforts every Hour make known
 His Providence and Grace.

Song XXVII. For the Lord's Day Morning, which opens,

This is the Day when Christ arose
 So early from the Dead:
 Why should I keep my Eye-lids clos'd,
 And waste my Hours in Bed?

Song XXVIII. For the Lord's Day Evening, beginning,

Lord, how delightful 'tis to see
 A whole Assembly worship thee!
 At once they sing, at once they pray,
 They hear of Heaven, and learn the Way.

Much has been done in the field of Children's Praise, in the light of a growing knowledge of child psychology, since 1715, when these divine songs entered the homes and nurseries of England. Their excellency pales amid the brighter galaxy of Child Songs, which the present day Sunday School and Children's Church have at their disposal. Yet excellent they were in 1715. There was nothing even approaching them in content, delightfulness, and versification.

Moreover/

Moreover, they followed a system: the chief occasions of a child's worship were taken into account. And they were, despite their being written in an age that understood little of child life, children's praises - not songs about children, but praises written for children. Weaknesses there are in these Songs: often they are narrow, sometimes their religious sentiment is priggish. But they hardly ever patronise the child - as some later hymns for children undoubtedly do. In spite of Johnson's opinion, Watts never 'condescended' to write poems for children.³⁶ He joyed to stand on the child's level, and to look at life and religion from the child's height of mind and soul. John Wesley, who never understood the child as Watts did, criticises the Divine Songs just because they are childlike and lack the strong vitamins of an adult theology:

"There are two ways of writing or speaking to children: the one is, to let ourselves down to them; the other, to lift them up to us. Dr. Watts has wrote in the former way, and has succeeded admirably well, speaking to children as children, and leaving them as he found them. The following hymns are written on the other plan; they contain strong and manly sense, yet expressed in such plain and easy language, as even children may understand. But when they do understand them, they will be children no longer, only in years and stature."³⁷

Before Watts wrote for children, the main tendency in religious education had been to teach the child in such a way that he remains a child "no longer, only in years and stature".

Such were Janeway's godly children in the Token. And later, such were the boys who came under the educational oversight of John Wesley. It was Isaac Watts who humanised children's praises: they/

they were divine songs just because, for the first time, they were human and childlike.

In theme and execution the Divine Songs run parallel with Watts' work in adult praise. As in his Psalmody and Hymnody of the Church, so in his Songs for children, Watts excels in two fields - the field of sheer praise, and that other in which he rejoices in the ordinances of Christian worship. Notice in the Divine Songs how joyously he sings again of the Lord's Day Morning.³⁸

NOTES

CHAPTER 8

- 1 Cf. Chapt. 1, above.
- 2 Ibid
- 3 Edited Wm. Hazlitt, 1895. Sect. CXXXII. p.58.
- 4 Thomas Norton's Translation, 1634, Bk.4, Chapt.15, Sects.X,XI.
- 5 Areopagitica, 1644 (in Arber's Reprint, p.45)
- 6 A Christian Directory, Pt. 1., Direction 16.
- 7 Spiritual Counsel or, the Father's Advice to his Children,
(edition 1697).
- 8 "The Heaven and the Hell in our Divinity are infinitely more
delightful and dreadful than the Childish Figments (of
classical tales)"
Preface to Horae Lyricae, 1705.
- 9 The only copy of the original edition of Divine Songs, in
Britain, is in Dr. William's Library, London.
- 10 A Book for Boys and Girls: or, Country Rhimes for Children.
By J.B., London, 1686.
- 11 The 74 Pieces in the first edition are as follows:-
 - 1 Upon the Ten Commandments, (omitted in 1701)
 - 2 The awaken'd Child's Lamentation. (omitted 1701)
 - 3 Meditations upon an Egg.
 - 4/

- 4 Upon the Lord's Prayer.
- 5 Meditation upon Peep of day.
- 6 Upon the Flint in the Water.
- 7 Upon the Fish in the Water.
- 8 Upon the Swallow.
- 9 Upon the Bee.
- 10 Upon the Creed. (omitted in 1701 edition)
- 11 Upon a low'ring Morning.
- 12 Upon over-much Niceness.
- 13 Meditations upon the Candle.
- 14 Upon the Sacraments.
- 15 Upon the Sun's Reflection upon the ^{clouds} ~~Clouds~~ in a
fair Morning.
- 16 Upon Apparel.
- 17 The Sinner and the Spider.
- 18 Meditations upon day before Sun-rising.
- 19 Of the Mole in the Ground.
- 20 Of the Cuckow.
- 21 Of the Boy and Butter Fly.
- 22 Of the Fly at the Candle.
- 23 Upon the Lark and the Fowler.
- 24 Of the fatted Swine. (omitted 1701)
- 25 On the rising of the Sun.
- 26 Upon the promising Fruitfulness of a Tree.
- 27 On the Post-boy. (omitted 1701)
- 28 Upon the Horse in the Mill (omitted 1701)
- 29 Upon a Ring of Bells. do.
- 30 Upon the Thief.
- 31 Of the Child with the Bird at the Bush.
- 32 Of Moses and his Wife.
- 33 Upon the barren Fig-tree in God's Vineyard.
- 34 Of the Rose-bush.
- 35 Of the going down of the Sun.
- 36 Upon the Frog.
- 37 Upon the whipping of a Top.
- 38 Upon the Pismire.
- 39 Upon the Beggar.
40. Upon an Instrument of Musick in an unskilful Hand.
(omitted 1701).
- 41 Upon the Horse and his Rider.
- 42 Upon the Sight of a Pound of Candles falling to the
Ground.
- 43 Of Fowls flying in the Air.
- 44 Upon a Penny Loaf.
- 45 Upon the Vine-tree.
- 46 The Boy and Watch-maker.
- 47 Upon the Boy and his Paper of Plumbs. (omitted 1701).
- 48 Upon a Looking-glass.
- 49 Upon a Lanthorn. (omitted 1701)
- 50/

- 50 Of the Love of Christ.
- 51 Of the Horse and Drum (omitted 1701)
- 52 On the Kackling of a Hen.
- 53 Upon an Hour-Glass.
- 54 Upon the Chalk-stone. (omitted 1701)
- 55 Upon a Stinking Breath. (left out 1701)
- 56 Upon Death. (omitted 1701)
- 57 Upon the Snail
- 58 Of the Spouse of Christ.
- 59 Upon a Skilful Player on an Instrument.
- 60 Upon Fly-blows. (omitted 1701)
- 61 Of Man by Nature.
- 62 Of Physick (omitted 1701).
- 63 Upon a Pair of Spectacles. (omitted 1701)
- 64 Upon our being so afraid of small Creatures.
(omitted 1701)
- 65 Upon our being afraid of the Apparition of Evil
Spirits. (omitted 1701).
- 66 Upon the Disobedient Child.
- 67 Upon the Boy on his Hobby-horse. (omitted 1701).
- 68 Upon the Image in the Eye. (omitted 1701)
- 69 Upon the Weather cock. (omitted 1701)
- 70 Upon a Sheet of white Paper.
- 71 Upon the Boy dull at his Book. (omitted 1701)
- 72 Upon Time and Eternity. (omitted)
- 73 Upon Fire.
- 74 Upon Beauty. (omitted 1701)

12

Cf. Early American Children's Books 1682-1840.
The Private Collection of Dr. A.S.W. Rosenbach
On Exhibition at The New York Public Library, 1927
 New York, 1927.

13

Cf. James Hamilton, Our Christian Classics, 1859, vol.1. 310.
 and Heaven upon Earth (James Janeway) London, 1847.
 Intro. Essay, p. 21.

14

Cf. Rosemary Freeman: English Emblem Books. London, 1949.
 The Emblem from being a popular literary convention in the
 16th and 17th centuries in Europe passes eventually in
 Bunyan's books into an instrument of religious instruction.
 Bunyan's book of verse for boys and girls (cf. note 11 above) is
 largely a collection of Emblems.

- ¹⁵ Cf. The Book of the Craft of Dying and other Early English Tracts concerning Death. (Edited Frances M.M. Comper) 1917.
- ¹⁶ All these quotations are from the Introduction and Preface of Janeway's Token.
- ¹⁷ The first lines and titles of all the songs in Divine Songs will be found in the Appendix to the thesis, pp.101-104.
- ¹⁸ Cf. Chapt. 2, above.
- ¹⁹ Cf. Appendix to the thesis, p. 50.
- ²⁰ Cf. Appendix, p.52.
- ²¹ Ibid. p. 53.
- ²² Cf. Chapt. 1 for a full discussion of Watts' mastery of English prosody.
- ²³ Cf. Janeway's Preface to the Second Part of the Token.
- ²⁴ Token, p.17.
- ²⁵ Ibid. Pt. 1, p.4.
- ²⁶ Ibid. Pt. 1, 18.
- ²⁷ Token, 2nd Pt., p.62. Example XIII.
- ²⁸ Cf. Herrick's stanza with vv. V-VII of Watts' Divine Song. Both writers, ofcourse, might have derived their subject directly from the Book of Proverbs.

- 39 Watts' verses on the Bee might have taken their subject directly from the Septuagint version of Proverbs 6, v.8
- 30 The original edition of Divine Songs has only two Moral Songs. cf. Appendix, p.104.
- 31 Notably the influence of George Wither's Rocking Hymn, see Chapt.3, above.
- 32 True wit is nature to advantage dress'd,
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd.
Pope: Essay on Criticism.
Part 2, line 97.
- 33 Hymns and Spiritual Songs. Bk 2, H.30, v.2.
- 34 "The Divine Songs of Dr. Watts, so beautiful, and so universally admired, almost discourage, by their excellence, a similar attempt, and lead the way where it appears temerity to follow.....,etc."
From the "Advertisement" of
Hymns for Infant Minds. 31st ed. 1839.
- 35 The first lines and titles of the rest will be found in the Appendix, pp. 102-104.
- 36 Cf. "Life of Isaac Watts" in Samuel Johnson's Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets, where he says:-
"....for children he condescended to lay aside the scholar...to write little poems of devotion, etc."
- 37 Cf. Preface to Hymns for Children (1763), 1790 edition.
- 38 See Chaps. 6 and 7, above, for examples of Watts' joy in the Church and its ordinances.

CHAPTER 9IMITATOR OR PIONEER?

ISAAC WATTS' HYMNOLOGY is linked to the devotional verse and semi-hymnic experiments of the seventeenth century, mainly through the influence of the Presbyterian School of hymnologists under Richard Baxter's leadership (Chapter 3). To this school and to the work of Joseph Stennett he owed an interest in Sacramental hymnody, but in Watts' case the hymn for the Lord's Supper evolved from earlier groups of lyrics and hymns on the Divine Love theme of the Song of Songs (Chapter 2). Moreover, Watts' hymnody owed something to the social and liturgical situation of contemporary Dissent (Chapter 3).

His uniqueness as a hymnologist is that he crossed over into the hymn-country from the field of evangelical psalmody. And there were four stages in his Odyssey - conservative metrical psalmody; Christianized and naturalized psalmody; free Scripture paraphrase; the Scriptural hymn (Chapter 5). To discern this gradation in Watts' work and assess its originality, we must look now at the background of contemporary metrical psalmody - at least at those features of it that bear on Watts' reform.

Long/

Long before Watts wrote, efforts had been made to reform the language of the metrical psalms (Chapter 1). George Wither at an early date criticised the verbal barbarity of Sternhold and Hopkins (Chapter 3). And the leaders of the Royal Society - chiefly John Wilkins - gave an impetus to the growing movement to refine the language of the Singing Psalms. Wilkins sponsored metrical versions of the Psalter by Woodford and Denham (Chapter 1). Verbal changes were made in the text of the Old Version. And Tate and Brady's more poetic rendering of the Hebrew Psalms was in line with this reforming purpose.

From one angle Watts' method of paraphrasing the Psalms was in alignment with this language reform. As early as 1709 he was writing:

"....but they love the driest Translation of the Psalms best.....All that rises a Degree above Mr. Sternhold is too airy for Worship".

(Horae, p.VII)

In the Preface to his Psalms, 1719, p.XXVI, he says:

"....nor am I of the Mind of the Italian, who said,
Obscurity begets Greatness".

And in the same preface, on page XVI, he speaks of making the Psalmist use

"the common Sense and Language of a Christian.

Watts' views of the proper language for psalmody are stated, we believe, in A Guide to Prayer (Appendix). Like Sternhold he wanted a psalmody which common folk could both understand and sing. And though he was critical of the uncouthness of the Old Version, and/

and would tame its verbal wildness, he wished to keep the language of praise

"within the Reach of an unlearned Reader (Preface of Psalms, p.XXV) and permitted (his) verse to rise above the Flat and indolent Style....because (he) would neither indulge any bold Metaphors, nor admit of hard Words, nor tempt an ignorant Worshipper to sing without his Understanding. (Ibid p.XXVI). (He) always avoided the Language of the Poets where it did not suit the Language of the Gospel (Ibid p.XXVI)."

He advises the worshipper to avoid glittering language and affected style.

"When you address God in worship, 'tis a Fault to be borrowing Phrases from the Theatre, and profane Poets. This does not seem to be the Language of Canaan. (Guide to Prayer, p.109.)

Watts has been criticised, too severely we think, for using almost exclusively the language of discourse and religious conversation in the eighteenth century meeting-house.¹ It will not do to judge his work in this way by literary and aesthetic canons that he did not himself accept. Like Calvin's, Watts' main aim was to provide singable and intelligible praise for ordinary folk - in his case, for the people who met Sabbath after Sabbath in the gathered churches of Dissent. Legitimately, he used a language and idiom with which the worshippers were familiar. And for this reason many of his hymns and psalm imitations date, and have been long since outmoded. But it would be a great mistake to imagine that Watts adopted uncritically the language of religious discourse. Had that been so, Davis and other writers would have had to say much harsher things about the language of his psalmody.

It/

It has been suggested that Watts wrote at a time of liturgical anarchy in the Nonconformist Churches (Chapter 4). Reading between the lines of his section on language and expression in A Guide to Prayer (Appendix), we infer that a critical and refined use of language was by no means characteristic of the worship of the churches of his day. For example, he writes to discourage the use in spiritual conversation and prayer of "old and obsolete words"; of "new words...borrowed from foreign Languages"; of "philosophical expressions" and the incomprehensible "language of mystical divinity"; of mixed and meandering metaphors; of flowery poetical expressions; and of mean and familiar language which exposes "religion to profane scoffs, by a too familiar Mention of the Name of Christ".² By a selective process, almost creative in quality, Watts had to provide a vocabulary of praise within the comprehension of the churches he knew, yet marked by a general tone of refinement and clarity, which by no means constituted the common denominator of discourse in the Independent meeting-houses. John Patrick before him had paraphrased a few Psalms in the vocabulary and idiom of the Christian Church: Watts used Patrick's work - already popular in Dissent - as a spring-board for his own more ruthless language reform (Chapter 6).

But something more was required than the revision of the language of Psalmody (Chapter 4). The metrical Psalms failed as Christian praise for psychological reasons (Chapter 5). Luther had realised this long ago. So had the authors and compilers of Psalters in Switzerland/

Switzerland and Holland, who had used the device of giving an evangelical turn to certain of the Psalms.³ (Benson, 52ff.) In England the same method had been adopted sporadically by devotional poets like Matthew Parker, 1504-75, William Hunnis, d.1597, and Phineas Fletcher, 1582-1650.⁴ It had appeared also, as Watts himself says (Preface, p.VI), in the metrical versions of Milbourne, Darby and Patrick.⁵ It is not lacking in Mason.⁶ We have noticed that it appears sometimes in the work of Samuel Wesley, Burgess and, with modifications, in Keach (Chapter 3). Evangelical elements are present even in the early editions of Sternhold and Hopkins.⁷

However, before John Patrick published his A Century of Select Psalms....., in 1679, this device of giving the popular singing psalms an evangelical turn had not been successfully used by any other writer. We have Richard Baxter's word for it, that Patrick's version of the Psalms was popular with the Dissenters before Watts' reform:

"Mr. Patrike of the Charterhouse hath with pious Skill and Seriousness turned into a new Metre many of David's Psalms, and the Advantage for holy Affections and Harmony, hath so far reconciled the Nonconformists, that divers of them use his Psalms in their Congregations, though they have their old ones, Rouse's, Bishop King's, Mr. White's, the New Englands's, Davison's, the Scots, (agreed on by two Nations) in competition with it. (Poet. Frag. 1681. "The Epistle to the Reader").

Watts attributes the favour of Patrick's version with the Nonconformists to the fact that he has in some senses 'Christianised' the/

the Hebrew Psalms:

"....he hath made use of the present Language of Christians in several Psalms, and left out many of the Judaisms. This is the Thing that hath introduced him into the Favour of so many religious Assemblies. Even those very Persons that have Aversion to sing any thing in Worship but David's Psalms have been led insensibly to fall in with Dr. Patrick's Performance by a Relish of pious Pleasure; never considering that his Work is by no means a just Translation, but a Paraphrase".

Preface to Psalms, p.VI.

Patrick's lead in this, as well as in the matter of language, was Watts' starting point for a more thorough reform. He applies the method that Patrick merely suggests and illustrates in a few Psalms, in a root and branch fashion to practically the whole of the Psalter (Chapters 5 and 6).⁸

Alongside of this attempt to Christianize the Psalms, Watts tries to naturalize and contemporize them (Chapter 5). We see the beginnings perhaps of this method in the patriotic verse of George Wither (Chapter 3). It probably began in the writing of hymns for 5th November. One of Watts' earliest hymns is one for the celebration of deliverance from the Gunpowder Plot.⁹ (Cf. Book 2, H.92). It was quite natural to write of this mighty deed of God in the language of the Hebrew Psalms which spoke of the divine deliverances of Israel. England thus gradually came to be regarded as God's new Israel, delivered by His arm and shielded by His presence. The same tendency to naturalize the Psalms is found also in the work of Woodford and Tate and Brady.¹⁰ But not until Watts adopted the device was it ever used so completely, and sometimes so artificially. It/

It should be remembered however, in extenuation, that Watts lived in an age when this kind of contemporisation was a literary convention. He was only doing with the Hebrew Psalter what Dryden had done and what Pope was yet to do with the epics and satires of Greece and Rome (Chapter 6). Watts' patriotism often led him astray in his contemporary interpretation of the Psalms: and sometimes his Imitation of the Psalms presents, as John Ker remarks, "the old and new in perplexing conjunction, and Britain and Zion claiming attention by turns".¹¹

II.

In addition to derivative features of a general kind mentioned here and elsewhere (Chapter 3), the following specific borrowings in the work of Watts should be noted:-

A. THE PSALMS

(1) From Luke Milbourne

Milbourne's version of Psalm 65, v.1:

Praise, Lord, in Sion waits for Thee;
To Thee our holy vows we pay.
Thou hear'st us; when, in misery,
To Thee the suppliant world shall pray

recalls Watts' 1st Pt. C.M. version of the same Psalm, v.1.

Praise waits in Zion, Lord, for Thee;
There shall our Vows be paid:
Thou hast an Ear when Sinners pray,
All Flesh shall seek thine Aid.

Notice, Watts assimilates and recreates what he borrows, and has a gift/

gift of stanza architecture which is missing in the work of his predecessor.

(2) From John Patrick.

One of Watts' earliest Psalm versions, Psalm 100, Praise to the Lord from all Nations (Horae Lyricae, 1705), which begins,

Sing to the Lord with Joyful Voice
has two lines borrowed from Patrick's version (viz.)

Patrick: Know that the Lord is God alone
Watts : Know that the Lord is God alone

Patrick: Enter his Gates with thankfull hearts
Watts : Enter his Gates with Thankful Songs

This seems to prove that from the beginning of his work upon the Psalms Watts had put Dr. Patrick's version before him as a model for psalm-versions intended to be used and understood by the common people.

Cf. also

Psalm 63. S.M. Seeking God.

Watts: My thirsty fainting Soul
Thy Mercy doth implore;
Not Travellers in desert Lands
Can pant for Water more.

Patrick: Early, O Lord, my fainting Soul
Thy Mercy does implore;
No Travellour in desert Lands
Can thirst for Water more.

Watts: Thy Power and Glory to behold,
And feel thy quickening Grace.

Patrick: Thy Pow'r and Glory to behold,
And so obtain thy Grace.

Watts/

Watts: For Life without thy Love
No Relish can afford;
No Joy can be compar'd to this
To serve and please the Lord.

Patrick: For Life it self, without thy Love,
No Relish does afford;
No other joys can equal this,
to serve and praise the Lord.

Watts: No the rich Dainties of a Feast
Such Food or Pleasure give.

Patrick: This, like the choicest dainties, will
Both food and pleasure give.

Watts: In wakefull Hours at Night
I call my God to mind;
I think how wise thy Counsels are,
And all thy Dealings kind.

Patrick: When others sleep, my wakefull thoughts
Present thee to my mind;
And in the night I think how good
My God has been, and kind.

Watts: Since thou hast been my Help
To Thee my Spirit flies,
And on thy watchfull Providence
My chearfull Hope relies.

Patrick: Since thou alone hast been my help,
To thee alone I fly;
And on thy watchfull Providence
With cheerfulness rely.

Psalm 139. First Part C.M. God is every where.

Watts: To shun thy Presence, Lord, or flee
The Notice of thine Eye. (v.1)

Patrick: Whose force I neither can resist
Nor scape the notice of thine Eye (v.3)

Watts: Within thy circling Arms I ly,
Beset on every Side. (v.4)

Patrick: On every side within the reach
Of thine encircling Arms I lie (v.3)

Watts/

Watts: Lord, where shall guilty Souls retire (v.6)
 Patrick: Whither can I retire, and find, etc. (v.4)

Watts: If wing'd with Beams of Morning-Light
 I fly beyond the West,
 Thy Hand, which must support my Flight,
 Would soon betray my Rest. (v.8)

Patrick: Could I remove to th'utmost Sea
 Wing'd with the swiftest Morning ray;
 Thy hand that thither must support
 My flight, would my abode betray. (v.5)

Watts: If o'er my Sins I think to draw
 The Curtains of the Night. (v.9)

Patrick: If o'er my sins I think to draw
 The blackest Curtains of the Night. (v.6)

These borrowings illustrate the supremacy of Watts as a Psalmist. His syntax is simpler, an essential in praises to be sung by ordinary folk. He avoids needless adjectives; and wherever possible substitutes concrete for abstract expressions. Generally, he makes the caesura fall at the end of the line - very necessary when the method of 'lining-out' was customary in the performance of Psalmody, (Chapter 4).

(3) From Tate and Brady.

Psalm 21. C.M. Our King is the Care of Heaven

Watts: The King, O Lord, with Songs of Praise
 Shall in thy Strength rejoice;
 And blest with thy Salvation raise
 To Heaven his chearful Voice.

Tate: The King, O Lord, with Songs of Praise
 shall in thy Strength rejoice;
 With thy Salvation crown'd, shall raise
 to Heav'n his chearful Voice.

Watts: Thy sure Defence thro' Nations round
 Has spread his glorious Name;
 And his successful Actions crown'd,
 With Majesty and Fame. (v.2)

Tate/

Tate: Thy sure defence through Nations round,
etc. (v.5)

Watts: Then let the King on God alone
For timely aid rely;
His Mercy shall support the Throne,
And all our Wants supply (v.3).

Tate: Because the King on God alone
for timely Aid relies;
His mercy still supports his Throne,
and all his Wants supplies. (v.7)

Watts: But, righteous Lord, his stubborn foes
Shall feel thy dreadful Hand;
Thy vengeful Arm shall find out those
That hate his mild Command. (v.4)

Tate: But righteous Lord, thy stubborn foes
shall feel thy dreadful Hand;
Thy vengeful Arm shall find out those
that hate thy mild Command. (v.8)

Watts: When thou against them dost engage,
Thy just, but dreadful Doom
Shall, like a fiery Oven rage,
Their Hopes and them consume. (v.5)

Tate: When thou against them dost engage,
thy just and Dreadful Doom
Shall like a glowing Oven rage,
their Hopes and them consume. (v.9)

Watts: Thus, Lord, thy wondrous Power declare,
And thus exalt thy Fame;
Whilst we glad Songs of Praise prepare
For thine Almighty Name. (v.6)

Tate: Thus, Lord, thy wondrous Strength disclose
and thus exalt thy Fame;
Whilst we glad Songs of Praise compose
to thy almighty Name. (last verse).

Psalm 113. Proper Tune. The Majesty and Condescension of God.

Watts: Ye that delight to serve the Lord,
 The Honours of his Name record,
 His sacred Name for ever bless:
 Where e'er the circling Sun displays
 His rising Beams, or setting Rays,
 Let Lands and Seas his Power Confess. (v.1)

Tate: Ye Saints and Servants of the Lord,
 the triumphs of his Name record,
 His sacred Name for ever bless.
 Where e'er the circling Sun displays
 his rising Beams or setting Rays,
 due Praise to his great Name address. (v.1)

Watts: Let no created Greatness dare
 With our eternal God compare. (v.2)

Tate: With him whose Majesty excels,
 who made the heaven in which he dwells
 let no created Power compare. (v.2)

Watts: He bows his glorious Head to view
 What the bright Hosts of Angels do, etc. (v.3)

Tate: Tho' tis beneath his State to view
 in highest heaven what Angels do, etc. (v.3)

Watts: When childless Families despair,
 He sends the Blessing of an Heir
 To rescue their expiring Name;
 The Mother with a thankfull Voice
 Proclaims his Praises and her Joys:
 Let every Age advance his Fame. (v.4)

Tate: When childless Families despair,
 he sends the Blessing of an Heir,
 to rescue their expiring Name;
 Makes her that barren was to bear,
 and joyfully her Fruit to rear,
 O then extol his matchless Fame! (v.4)

Psalm 112, as the 113th Psalm. The Blessings of the Liberal Man.

Watts: That Man is blest who stands in Awe
Of God, and loves his sacred Law:
His Seed on Earth shall be renown'd:
His House the Seat of Wealth shall be
An inexhausted Treasury,
And with successive Honours crown'd. (v.1)

Tate: That Man is best who stands in awe
Of God, and loves his sacred Law:
His Seed on Earth shall be renown'd,
And with successive honours crown'd.
His house, the Seat of Wealth shall be,
An inexhausted Treasury;
His Justice free from all Decay,
Shall Blessings to his heirs convey. (v.1)

Watts: His liberal Favours he extends,
To Some he gives, to Others lends:
A generous Pity fills his Mind:
Yet what his Charity impairs,
He saves by Prudence in Affairs,
And thus he's just to all Mankind. (v.2)

Tate: His lib'ral Favours he extends,
to some he gives, to others lends:
Yet what his Charity impairs,
He saves by Prudence in Affairs..(v.2 lines 5-8)

As well as just to all Mankind (v.2 line 4)

Watts: His Hands, while they his Alms bestow'd,
His Glory's future Harvest sow'd;
The sweet Remembrance of the Just
Like a green Root revives and bears
A train of Blessings for his Heirs,
When dying Nature sleeps in Dust. (v.3)

Tate: His hands, while they his Alms bestow'd,
His glory's future harvest sow'd,
Whence he shall reap Wealth, Fame, Renown,
A temp'ral and eternal Crown. (v.4)

The sweet Remembrance of the Just
Shall flourish when he sleeps in dust.
(v.3 lines 3-4).

Watts/

Watts: Beset with threatening Dangers round,
Unmov'd shall he maintain his Ground;
His Conscience holds his Courage up;
The Soul that's fill'd with Vertue's Light,
Shines brightest in Affliction's Night:
And sees in Darkness Beams of Hope. (v.4)

Tate: Beset with threatening dangers round,
Unmov'd shall he maintain his ground:
The sweet Remembrance of the Just,
Shall flourish when he sleeps in dust.
(v.6, lines 1-4)

The Soul that's fill'd with Vertue's Light,
Shines brightest in Affliction's Night.
(v.2, lines 1-2)

Watts: The Wicked shall his Triumph see,
 And gnash their Teeth in Agony,
 To Find their Expectations crost:
 (v.6, lines 1-3)

Tate: The Wicked shall his triumph see
 And gnash his teeth in agony.
 (v.4, lines 5-6)

Notice how Watts often simplifies the vocabulary of the New Version. His method allows him, too, to transpose lines and verses, and thus he supplies a sense of unity that is sometimes missing in Tate and Brady. Watts also achieves a more logical progression of thought.

Watts: Ill Tidings never can surprize
His Heart that fix'd on God relies,
Tho' Waves and Tempests roar around:
Safe on the Rock he sits, and sees
The Shipwreck of his Enemies,
And all their Hope and Glory drown'd. (v.5)

Tate: Ill tidings never can surprize
His heart, that fix'd on God relies:
On safety's Rock he sits and sees
The Ship-wreck of his Enemies. (v.3 lines 5-8)

Psalm 139 First Part. L.M. The All-seeing God.

Watts: Within thy circling Power I stand;
On every Side I find thy Hand
(v.3, lines 1-2)

Tate: Surrounded by thy Pow'r I stand,
On every side I find thy hand
(v.3, lines 1-2)

Watts: Where, Lord, could I thy Presence shun,
Or from thy dreadful Glory run?
(v.6, lines 3-4)

Tate: Where, Lord, could I thy Influence shun,
Or whither from thy presence run?
(v.4, lines 3-4)

Watts: If up to Heaven I take my Flight,
'Tis there thou dwell'st enthron'd in Light:
Or dive to Hell, there Vengeance reigns,
And Satan groans beneath thy Chains. (v.7)

Tate: If up to heav'n I take my flight,
'Tis there thou dwell'st, enthron'd in light;
If down to hell's infernal Plains,
'Tis there Almighty Vengeance reigns. (v.5)

Watts: If mounted on a Morning Ray
I fly beyond the Western Sea,
Thy swifter Hand wou'd first arrive,
And there arrest thy Fugitive. (v.8)

Tate: If I the Morning's Wings cou'd gain
And fly beyond the Western Main,
Thy swifter hand would first arrive,
And there arrest thy Fugitive. (v.6)

Watts: Or should I try to shun thy Sight
Beneath the spreading Veil of Night,
One Glance of Thine, one piercing Ray
Wou'd kindle Darkness into Day. (v.9)

Tate: Or should I try to shun thy sight
Beneath the sable Wings of Night,
One glance from Thee, one piercing Ray
Would kindle Darkness into Day. (v.7)

Watts/

Watts: The Veil of Night is no Disguise,
No Screen from thy all-searching Eyes;
Thy Hand can seize thy Foes as soon
Thro' Midnight-shades as blazing Noon. (v.11)

Tate: The Veil of Night is no Disguise,
No Screen from thy all-searching Eyes:
Thro' mid-night shades thou find'st thy way,
As in the blazing Noon of Day.

Watts' version is more of an artistic whole than Tate's, although Tate occasionally achieves memorable verses. Notice Watts' skilful use of the chorus, relieving the monotony. He purges Tate of poetic expressions.

Psalm 139. Second Part L.M. The wonderful Formation of Man.

Watts: Thy Thoughts of Love to me surmount
The Power of Numbers to recount.
(v.6, lines 3-4)

Tate: Thy thoughts of Love to me surmount
The Pow'r of Numbers to recount.
(v.13, lines 3-4)

Watts: I could survey the Ocean o'er,
And count each Sand that makes the Shore
Before my swiftest Thoughts could trace
The numerous Wonders of thy Grace. (v.7)

Tate: Far sooner could I reckon o'er
The sands upon the Ocean shore:
Each Morn revising what I have done,
I find the Account but new begun. (v.14)

Psalm 139. Third Part L.M.

Watts: O turn my Feet when e'er I stray,
And lead me in thy perfect Way.
(v.4, lines 3-4)

Tate: Correct me where I go astray,
And guide me in thy perfect way.

(v.18, lines 3-4)

(4) From Sir John Denham.Psalm 23. L.M. God our Shepherd

Watts: My Shepherd is the living Lord (v.1)

Denham: My Shepherd is the living Lord (v.1)

Psalm 80. The Church's Prayer under Affliction, etc.

Watts: Great Shepherd of thine Israel,
 Who didst between the Cherubs dwell,
 And lead the Tribes, thy chosen Sheep,
 Safe thro' the Desart and the Deep. (v.1)

Denham: Great Shepherd of thy Israel!
 Who Joseph like a Flock dost guide,
 Between the Cherubims dost dwell,
 Stir up thy wondrous Strength: nor hide, (v.1)

Psalm 89, First Pt. L.M. The Covenant made with Christ,
etc.,

Watts: For ever shall my Song record
 The Truth and Mercy of the Lord:
 Mercy and Truth for ever stand
 Like Heaven establish'd by his Hand. (v.1)

Denham: From Age to Age I will record
 The Truth and Mercy of the Lord.
 His Faithfulness as firmly stands,
 As Heaven establish'd by his Hands. (v.1)

Notice that Watts has a better conception of stanzaic structure, and makes his verses more of a unity than Denham.

Psalm 94, First Pt. Saints chastised, and Sinners destroyed, etc.,

Watts: O God to whom Revenge belongs (v.1)

Denham: O God to whom Revenge belongs (v.1)

Psalm 95, C.M. A Psalm before Prayer.

Watts: Sing to the Lord Jehovah's Name
 And in his Strength rejoice;
 When his Salvation is our Theme,
 Exalted be our Voice. (v.1)

Denham: /

Denham: Come let us sing Jehovah's Praise,
 And in his Name rejoice:
 To our Salvation's Rock we'll raise,
 In sacred Hymns, our Voice. (v.1)

Psalm 100. First Metre, a Plain Translation. Praise to our Creator.

Watts: Ye Nations round the Earth rejoice

Denham: Ye Nations of the Earth rejoice

Psalm 104. The Glory of God in Creation and Providence.

Watts: My Soul, thy great Creator praise;
 When cloth'd in his celestial Rays
 He in full Majesty appears,
 And like a Robe his Glory wears (v.1)

Denham: My Soul, thy great Creator praise,
 When Cloth'd in his celestial Rays:
 He in full Majesty appears,
 And like a Robe his Glory wears. (v.1)

Watts: The Heavens are for his Curtains spread;
 Th'unfathom'd Deep he makes his Bed:
 Clouds are his Chariot, when he flies
 On winged Storms a'cross the Skies. (v.2)

Denham: The Skys (sic) are for his Curtains spread,
 Th'unfathom'd Deep he makes his Bed,
 The Clouds are his triumphant Char,
 The Winds his fleeing Coursers are. (v.2)

Watts: Angels, whom his own Breath inspires,
 His Ministers, are flaming Fires;
 And swift as Thought their Armies move
 And bear his Vengeance or his Love. (v.3)

Denham: Angels whom his own Breath inspires,
 His Ministers, are flaming Fires;
 The Earth's Foundations by his Hand
 Are pois'd, and shall for ever stand. (v.3)

Watts has the better sense of unity: he makes each verse deal with one matter, (using the Hebrew device of parallelism). not with two unrelated/

unrelated themes, as Denham does.

Watts: God from his cloudy Cistern pours
On the parch'd Earth enriching Show'rs.
(v.9, lines 1-2)

Denham: God from his cloudy Cistern pours
On the parch'd Earth enriching Show'rs.
(Pt.2, v.7)

Watts: I to my God my Heavenly King
Immortal Hallelujahs sing
(v.28 last couplet).

Denham: But I shall to my Lord and King
Eternal Hallelujahs sing.
(last couplet)

Psalm 105. God's Conduct of Israel, etc.,

Watts: Give thanks to God, invoke his Name (v.1)
Denham: Give thanks to God, invoke his Name (v.1)

Psalm 124. A Song for the 5th of November.

Watts: Had not the Lord, may Israel say,
Had not the Lord maintain'd our Side (v.1)

Denham: Had not the Lord stood on our Side (v.1)

Psalm 142. God is the Hope of the Helpless

Watts: My Soul was overwhelm'd with Woes,
My Heart began to break;
My God who all my Burdens knows,
He knows the Way I take. (v.2)

Denham: My Soul was overwhelm'd with Woe,
But thou my Paths didst know (v.2)

(5) From John Mason.

Psalm 146 as the 118th Psalm. Praise to God for his Goodness
and Truth.

Watts: I'll praise my Maker with my Breath, etc.

Mason: Thee will I love, and praise, and sing,
Till Life and Breath shall cease

(XXIII. A Song of Praise for Peace of
Conscience, v.1.

Psalm 116, 2nd Pt. C.M. Vows made in Trouble, etc.,

Watts: What shall I render to my God
For all his Kindness shown (v.1)

Mason: What shall I render to my God
For all his Gifts to me.
(No.2 A General Song of Praise
to Almighty God).

(6) From Matthew Prior

Psalm 72, 2nd L.M. Christ's Kingdom among the Gentiles.

Watts: Jesus shall reign where'er the Sun
Does his successive journies run (v.1)

Prior:the constant Sun
With measur'd Steps his radiant Journeys run.

(On Exodus....An Ode, 1688)

B. THE HYMNS

(1) From Thomas Shepherd (Penitential Cries, 1701)

Watts: My God, my Life, my Love,
To thee, to thee I call,
I cannot live if thou remove,
For thou art All in All.
(Hymns and Spiritual Songs. Bk.2, H.93)

Shepherd:
My God, my God, my Light, my Love,
Mine all in all to me, etc. (XXX. Ps.63, v.8)

Compare these two hymns in their entirety.

Watts: Not Earth, nor all the Sky
Can one Delight afford,
No, not a drop of real Joy,
Without thy Presence, Lord (Hymns, Bk 2, H.93)

and many others in Bk. 2 with

Shepherd:/

Shepherd: My Soul, there's nothing here that can
 True Blessedness afford;
 Ye painted shadows, get you gone,
 Ye hold me from my Lord
 (iii. The Sinner's Retreat).

(2) From John Mason.

Watts: Could we but climb where Moses stood, etc.
 (Hymns, Book 2, 66)

Mason: Canaan I view from Pisgah's Top, etc.
 (Songs of Praise, XXX)

Watts: Awake my Zeal, awake by Love
 (Sermonic Hymns, 40)

Mason: Away dark thoughts! Awake, my Joy;
 Awake, my Glory, Sing. (Songs of Praise, XII)

Watts: Now to the Lord that makes us know
 (Hymns, Book 1, 61)

Mason: Songs of Praise, Nos. 30, 33.

Watts: Come let us joyn our chearful Songs
 (Hymns, Book 1, 62)

Mason: Songs of Praise, XIV. A Song of Praise for
 Redemption.
 v.2, line 5 reads:

Come let us joyn with Angels then

Songs of Praise, XXXIII, v.2, reads:

The Lamb is worthy that was slain

Watts: Dread Sovereign, let my Evening Song
 (Hymns, Book 2, H.7)

Mason: Now from the Altar of my Heart,
 Let Incense Flames arise;
 Assist me, Lord, to offer up
 Mine Evening Sacrifice.
 (Songs of Praise, XI. A Song of Praise
 for Evening).

Watts:/

Watts: Whene'er I take my Walks abroad,
 How many Poor I see?
 What shall I render to my God
 For all his Gifts to me?
 (Divine Songs, No.4. Praise for Mercies
 Spiritual and Temporal).

Mason: What shall I render to my God
 For all his Gifts to me
 (Songs of Praise, No.2)

This couplet was quite a favourite with Watts; he uses it, slightly altered, as we have noticed, in his rendering of Psalm 116. John Mason was a mine in which not only Watts, but also Charles Wesley, Joseph Hart and other hymn-writers industriously and wisely delved.

(3) From Benjamin Keach.

Watts: Divine Songs, Nos.5 and 6.

Keach: Blessed be God that we were born
 Under the joyful sound,
 And rightly have Baptized been,
 And bred on English ground.

.....

We might have been dark Pagans all,
 Or veiled like each a Jew,
 Or cheated with an Alcoran
 Amongst the Turkish crew.

Dumb Pictures might we all ador'd,
 Like Papists in Devotion;
 And with Rome's Errours so been stor'd,
 To drink her deadly Potion, etc.
 (Spiritual Melody, Hymn 97)

Ofcourse, Watts' verse is very much superior: Keach's is sometimes doggerel. Watts' catholicity saved him from ever being so narrowly propagandist/

propagandist as Keach is, particularly in verse 1.

Watts: Hymns and Spiritual Songs, Bk. 1. Hymns on
Titles of Christ.

Keach: Spiritual Melody, Hymns 65-66.

(4) From Joseph Stennett

To the derivative elements from Stennett mentioned in Chapter 3, the following may be added:

In Watts' Remnants of Time employ'd in Verse appeared the hymn, "The mighty Frame of glorious Grace" (cf. Chapter 7) with the note,

"In this ode there are three or four lines taken from Mr. Stennett's Sacramental Hymns; for, when I found they expressed my thought and design in proper and beautiful language, I chose rather to borrow, and to acknowledge the debt, than to labour hard for worse lines, that I might have the poor pleasure of calling them my own".

The lines thus borrowed are found in the 37th of the Sacramental Hymns, of which the 7th and 10th verses are as follows:

He that distributes Crowns and Thrones,
Hangs on a Tree, and bleeds, and groans;
He on a Cross resigns his Breath,
Who keeps the Keys of Hell and Death. (v.7)

Thus Sin, Death, and the Powers of Hell,
Conquer'd, disarm'd, and wounded fell.
He mounted then his Throne above,
And conquers Sinners by his Love. (v.10)

Of these eight lines, the first two and the eighth Watts adopts verbatim; while the third and fourth are adopted in substance. There is every likelihood that Watts was familiar with Stennett's Hymns from their first issue in 1697.

Watts' lyric, Mutual Love stronger than Death (Horae Lyricae, 1709), shows the influence of Stennett:

Watts:/

Watts: Had I ten thousand Lives my own,
 At his Demand,
 With Chearful Hand,
 I'd pay the Vital Treasure down
 In hourly Tributes at his Feet.
 (v.2, lines 4-8)

Stennett: Had I ten thousand Hearts, those Hearts should be
 A voluntary Sacrifice to Thee.
 (Dedication to Sacramental Hymns, lines
 130-1)

As we have suggested elsewhere, the same lines were to suggest the
 famous couplet of "When I survey":

Were the whole Realm of Nature mine
 That were a Present far too small
 (Hymns, Book 3, v.7)

It seems that other poems by Watts were suggested by this poetical
 dedication to Stennett's Sacramental Hymns. For example, compare
Horae Lyricae, The Fairest and only Beloved, v.6, lines 9-11 with
 line 138ff. of the Dedication, and Hymns and Spiritual Songs, Book
 2, 100, vv.4-5.

(5) From other sources.

In some old copies of King James' Bible we find a verse
 beginning:

Here is the spring where waters flow,
 To quench our heart of sin;
 Here is the tree where truth doth grow,
 To lead our lives therein

This perhaps influenced Watts' hymn on the Holy Scriptures, Book 2,
 119, where the same thought reappears as,

Here consecrated Water flows
 To quench my Thirst of Sin etc.

The resemblances between the two are sometimes remote, but where
 they/

they are closer the improvement on the original is so great as to reconcile us to the plagiarism.

(6) From Matthew Casimire Sarbiewski.

We have mentioned in Chapter 1 Watts' fondness for this neo-Latin poet. An edition of Sarbiewski's poems was printed at Cambridge, 1684, which Watts possessed as early as 1696. An index is prefixed to this copy in his own hand-writing, showing how fondly he had studied the compositions of the Polish Jesuit.

Hymn 4, Book 2 of Hymns and Spiritual Songs is little more than a translation of Casimire's Ode 5 of Liber Epodon with the title, Ad pedes Christi in Cruce morientis Actor provolutus.¹¹⁶

(7) From George Wither.

Cf. Wither's A Rocking Hymn (Hallelujah Pt.1, Hymn 50)
and
Watts' Cradle Hymn (Moral Songs (enlarged edition) No.VIII).

III.

Was Watts influenced at all by ancient and continental hymnody? John Ellerton thinks that he might have known the latin hymns of his contemporaries Santeuil, Coffin and Le Tourneaux in the Parisian Breviary.¹² Against this view, it has been said that Watts was too staunch a Puritan to look to Roman Catholic sources for/

for ideas or inspiration. But this is hardly true to the facts. The greatest single formative influence upon Watts as a poet was the Neo-latin verse of the Polish Jesuit Matthew Casimire Sarbiewski. However, an examination of the hymns of the Paris Breviary, and a comparison of their form and content with those of Watts, does not suggest that the English writer owed anything to his French contemporaries in the Roman Church. At the same time, there are grounds for believing that Watts, who was a lover of latin devotional verse,¹³ did borrow one or two of his themes from the hymnody of the ancient Church. And that he knew of the existence of an extensive hymnody in latin and Greek is clear from the Short Essay (Appendix, p.29-30).

Attention has been drawn in Chapters 2 and 7 to a considerable body of lyrics, psalms and hymns by Watts with the Christus Victor theme. This theological idea of Christ's conflict with, and triumph over Death and the Devil appears first of all in an early latin poem by young Watts (Chapter 2), which bears a strong resemblance to quite a number of latin hymns of the Passion and Resurrection. It is also present in Mediaeval Easter Carols. And it is a common theme of the Odes, Stichera and Contakia of the Eastern Church.¹⁴ Watts' latin poem is practically a paraphrase of an Ode by Synesius of Cyrene:

"Well-beloved/

Well-beloved and glory-laden,
 Born of Solyma's pure maiden!
 I would hymn Thee, blessed Warden,
 Driving from Thy Father's garden
 Blinking serpent's crafty lust,
 With his bruised head in the dust!
 Down Thou camest, low as earth,
 Bound to those of mortal birth;
 Down thou camest, low as hell,
 Where shepherd-Death did tend and keep
 A thousand nations like to sheep,
 While weak with age old Hades fell
 Shivering through his dark to view Thee,
 And the Dog did backward yell
 With jaws all gory to let through Thee!
 So, redeeming from their pain
 Choirs of disembodied ones,
 Thou didst lead whom Thou didst gather,
 Upward in ascent again,
 With a great hymn to the Father,
 Upward to the pure white thrones!
 King, the daemon tribes of air
 Shuddered back to feel thee there, etc. ¹⁵

(cf. The GreekXtian Poets, p.45ff.)

It is not unreasonable to believe that Watts borrowed the theme and its conventional imagery from the Songs and Hymns of the Ancient Church.

Was Watts influenced by French vernacular hymnody? We know that he learnt the French language at school, and was later sufficiently proficient in it to read French literary criticism.¹⁶ In the second edition of Horae Lyricae there are translations from the French. Moreover, his Huguenot lineage would ~~attract~~ him to the life and worship of a religious community, persecuted like his own. Huguenot refugees had churches in London.¹⁷ Watts must have known them, and also their chansonettes and imitations. French Psalm-books and Collections of Religious Songs antedated Watts' plea in Horae Lyricae for a Christian/

Christian Muse (Chapt.2). And before the appearance of Watts' Hymns, Benedict Pictet, who with two others had been commissioned to revise the French Psalter, suggested that it would be a "happy innovation" to add to it hymns reproducing the words of the gospel, after the precedent of the Lutheran Church. So in 1705 Pictet published anonymously Cinquante Quatre Cantiques Sacrez pour les Principales Solemnitez. The hymns are of three classes: Scripture narratives, Scripture paraphrases, and real hymns, some few of which passed into French hymnody. Though Watts must have had the greater number of his own hymns ready for the press before Pictet's volume appeared, he might conceivably have read it, and had his own hand strengthened thereby.

From the Short Essay we learn that Watts knew of German hymnody at the beginning of his own mature hymnological work (Appendix, p. 29). There is moreover an experiential note in his hymns which recalls the accent of Lutheran hymnody, though we have shown that Watts' stress on experience was an expression of his English Puritanism (Chapt.3). Besides, there is little likelihood that he had German among his linguistic accomplishments. "It is a familiar fact", writes Leslie Stephen, "that no Englishman read German literature in the eighteenth century".¹⁸ Though Watts did have contact with German hymnody later.¹⁹ The first indirect reference to German is the case of William Law who sweated at the language that he might translate the mystical works of Jacob Boehme.

But this does not mean that the rich treasurehouse of Lutheran hymnology/

hymnology would be closed to Watts. There was a Lutheran Church in France^{so}, in which the attitude taken to the translation and treatment of the Hebrew Psalms and the use of hymns had been from the first distinct from the Reformed Church. The French Lutheran Church used the Psalter only in part, and treated it in its typical and evangelical relation; and translations of the great German hymns were used along with it. Pseaumes, Hymnes et Cantiques.... mis en rime francais selon la rime et melodies allemandes, Francfort, 1612, contains 63 hymns or paraphrases. It would be out of character with Watts' thoroughness and catholicity, if, while quoting Boileau, Rapin, Racine and other French writers in the interest of his Christian poetry, he should yet have remained unacquainted with what had been done in France in the cause of evangelical hymnody, a cause which lay near his heart, and which, so far as his own work was concerned, he regarded as the chief contribution of his life to the Church. On the other hand, no writer could be more careful than Watts to acknowledge any considerable indebtedness to the work of others. This is so in his Lyrics, Psalms and Hymns. Not only does he make reference in his prefaces to predecessors who have influenced him, but sometimes in the texts themselves there are footnotes mentioning poems, psalm-versions and hymns from which he has largely borrowed or emended in the interest of his own purpose. Had Watts culled lines and verses, consciously, from French Lutheran sources, as he did from Patrick, Tate and Brady, Denham, Stennett and others, he would undoubtedly have acknowledged it./

it. The absence of direct evidence of borrowing from this field in an honest craftsman like Watts leads us to conclude that he owed little, if anything, to individual items of French Lutheran hymnody, whilst being influenced perhaps by its evangelical emphasis.

IV.

The only satisfactory answer to the question - was Watts an imitator or pioneer? - would be that he was both. During the bicentenary celebrations of his death, here and in America, he has been too freely, not to say uncritically acclaimed as an original writer. Yet originality is by no means an outstanding feature of his poems, psalms and hymns. As long ago as 1795, a letter in the Gentleman's Magazine pointed out that

"if his works were published with references at the foot of the page to authors from whom he borrowed, no vast share of originality would fall to his lot".

Many of these importations were made unconsciously. There were ofcourse, not infrequent occasions when as poet or hymnist, and sometimes as both combined, he did produce creative work of a high order which, to use his own words, was infused with "meridian light and meridian fervour". But it would seem, from the copious citations from Watts' sources in this and earlier chapters (Chapts.3 and 8), that his more pedestrian work, which the major portion of his verse represents, was stimulated by poets and versifiers whose writings he had read and from which he unblushingly borrowed.

His/

His religious importance apart, Watts has been hailed in recent years as a minor English poet of significance - a solitary romantic in an Age of Reason, whose work is a living link between the poetry of the seventeenth and late eighteenth centuries. More detailed research might reveal that Watts' romanticism was for the most part derivative. It came from the seventeenth-century religious poets whom he imitated, and from his early love for the Polish Jesuit poet Matthew Casimire Sarbiewski, whose latin lyrics united the sober elegance of the ancient classics with a genuine passion for nature, and a deep and fervent religious conviction, all being imbued with the writer's strange slavonic mood. It was Casimire who inspired many of the lyrics, some of the poems of Divine Love, and practically all the moral verses addressed to persons of note in Horae Lyricae. Little literary romanticism would be in evidence in Watts' first book if the influence of the Polish poet could be taken away.

To return to Watts' hymnology. Watts borrowed freely because he wrote, not with the self-consciousness of the artist, who out of conceit must needs be the genuine father of his offspring, but with a moral or religious purpose. This is clearly seen in what he says of his imitations of Casimire, and in the excuse he makes for using a few lines from a hymn by Joseph Stennett:

"when I found they expressed my thought and design
in proper and beautiful language, I chose rather
to borrow, and to acknowledge the debt, than to
labour hard for worse lines that I might have
the poor pleasure of calling them my own".

For the same reason Watts freely borrows from his forerunners in metrical/

metrical Psalmody.

Accordingly, if literary echoes, borrowings from other writers, and use of other men's materials are the main characteristics of the imitator, then Watts must be definitely classed in this category, at least so far as the content of his individual lyrics, psalms and hymns is concerned. Where then does his originality lie? In the manipulation of his material; in the clear sense of structure which marks almost every hymn he wrote, and is seen in the whole corpus of his Christian Psalmody, constituting its unity and one feature of its uniqueness. Watts was both the architect and builder of the modern English hymn and hymn-book, and thus the pioneer of British hymnological science.

We have mentioned in other places the architectonic quality of the individual psalms and hymns, and have endeavoured to show how Watts achieved it by the skilful use of metrical and literary devices, and by logical progression and unity of thought (Chapters 6 and 7).

"He showed...that a good hymn for popular use should have a single theme, organic unity, boldness of attack in the opening line, and a definite progression of thought throughout to a marked and decisive climax. Also, it should be short. His hymns are brief, compact, direct, and telling. Reasons like these justified James Montgomery in saying that Watts was 'the real founder of English Hymnody'"²¹

But Watts achieved this quality of structure in his hymns partly because he wrote them according to certain liturgical patterns. Roughly speaking, there are five such patterns, and their variants:

(1)/

(1) Often, particularly in Book 1 of Hymns and Spiritual Songs, which is mainly devoted to Scripture paraphrases, the hymn is a mere RECITAL of God's "amazing deeds", or of some religious or ethical doctrine: as in Book 1, Hymn 103:

I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,
Or to defend his Cause,
Maintain the Honour of his Word.
The Glory of his Cross.

Jesus, my God, I know his Name,
His Name is all my Trust,
Nor will he put my Soul to shame,
Nor let my Hope be lost.

Firm as his Throne his Promise stands,
And he can well secure
What I've committed to his Hands
Till the decisive Hour.

Then will he own my worthless Name
Before his Father's Face,
And in the new Jerusalem
Appoint my Soul a Place.

and Book 1, H.111, vv.3-6, which is really a versified confession:

'Tis not by Works of Righteousness
Which our own Hands have done;
But we are saved by sovereign Grace
Abounding thro' his Son.

'Tis from the Mercy of our God
That all our Hopes begin;
'Tis by the Water and the Blood
Our Souls are washed from Sin.

'Tis thro' the Purchase of his Death
Who hung upon the Tree,
The Spirit is sent down to breathe
On such dry Bones as we.

Raised from the Dead we live anew;
And justify'd by Grace
We shall appear in Glory too
And see our Father's Face.

Cf./

Cf. also Bk. 1, Hymns 10, 14, 26, 32, 41, 80, 105, 134: Bk. 2, Hymns 43, 65, 114, 129.

(2) Less frequently perhaps in the Hymns (more often in the Psalms) the hymn is almost wholly a personal RESPONSE in faith, dedication, or praise to God, as in Book 1, Hymn 81:

My God how endless is thy Love!
Thy Gifts are every Evening new,
And Morning Mercies from above,
Gently distil like early Dew.

Thou spread'st the Curtains of the Night,
Great Guardian of my sleeping Hours;
Thy sovereign Word restores the Light,
And quickens all my drowsy Pow'rs.

I yield my Pow'rs to thy Command,
To thee I consecrate my Days;
Perpetual Blessings from thine Hand
Demand perpetual Songs of Praise.

Cf. also Bk. 2, Hymns 7, 54, 93, 100 vv.4-5; 122, 139, 145. Notice that the hymn of pure response becomes almost a devotional lyric.

(3) In the majority of the hymns these two patterns, RECITAL AND RESPONSE, are combined in one of three ways:

- i. RECITAL - RESPONSE, as in Bk. 1, 95, where vv.1-3 are the Recital, and v.4 the Response:

Not all the outward Forms on Earth,
Nor Rites that God has giv'n,
Nor will of Man, nor Blood, nor Birth,
Can raise a Soul to Heav'n.

2

The sov'reign Will of God alone, etc.

3

The Spirit like some heav'nly Wind, etc.

4

Our quicken'd Souls awake, and rise
From the long Sleep of Death;
On heav'nly Things we fix our Eyes,
And Praise employs our Breath.

Bk.2, 89, "Hosanna to our conqu'ring King" has the Recital in vv.1-2, and the Response in vv.3-4, an example of neat and balanced architecture.

Cf. also Bk.1. 16,64,74,116,131,136; Bk.2. 47,66,79,87,88 142,160,168; Bk.3. 1,2,6,23.

ii. In which Recital and Response are intermingled, as in Bk. 1, 150:

Join all the glorious Names, etc.

Cf. also Bk.1, 108; Bk.2, 8,148.

iii. In which Recital and Response alternate, as in Bk.3, 7:

When I survey the wondrous Cross

By omitting verse 4, the hymn becomes an architectural gem of alternating recital and response: v.1. Recital: v.2 Response: v.3 Recital: v.4 Response in the form of a burst of almost seraphic praise. Cf. also Bk.1 79; Bk.2 9.

(4) INVITATION (or INVOCATION) - RECITAL. This is a rarer pattern in which a Gospel Invitation, or a Call to Worship, or a short Invocation of God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit is followed by the Recital of a religious or moral doctrine. As in Bk.2, 34, where the Invocation is repeated also at the end:

Come, Holy Spirit, heav'nly Dove,
With all thy quick'ning Pow'rs,
Kindle a Flame of sacred Love
In these cold Hearts of ours

vv. 2-3 are Recital

Cf. also Bk.1. 18, 132, 149; Bk.2. 84, 133.

(5) The most common type of hymn is the one that combines the three patterns - INVITATION (or INVOCATION) - RECITAL - RESPONSE, in that order: cf. Bk.1, 48, "Awake, our Souls, away, our Fears" in which v.1 is the Call or Invitation, vv.2,3, the Recital, and vv./

vv. 4,5, the Response.

Cf. also Bk.1. 51, 62, 63; Bk.2. 6, 14, 30, 69, 72, 76, 77, 82, 95,
104,140,167: Bk.3. 5.

Sometimes the middle term (Recital) is omitted; and we are left with the pattern, INVOCATION (or INVITATION) - RESPONSE, as in Bk.1 135, in which vv.1-2 form an Invocatory Prayer, and v.3 an ascription of Glory to God as the worshipper's response:

Come, dearest Lord, descend and dwell
By Faith and Love in every Breast;
Then shall we know, and taste, and feel
The Joys that cannot be exprest.

2.

Come, fill our Hearts with inward Strength,
Make our enlarged Souls possess,
And learn the Height, and Breadth, and Length,
Of thine unmeasurable Grace.

3.

Now to the God, whose Pow'r can do
More than our Thoughts and Wishes know
Be everlasting Honours done
By all the Church, thro' Christ his Son.

This structural sense and skill which constitute Watts' chief claim to originality as a hymnist are seen not only in individual psalm versions and hymns, but in each branch of his Christian Psalmody and in the whole body of his work. In Chapters 6 and 7 we have tried to show the liturgical structure of his Psalms and Hymns. Every piece that he wrote in those two volumes fits into an ecclesiastical or theological framework. With the help of both books, adding material from Divine Songs and the Sermonic Hymns, we/

we should find no difficulty in providing a useful hymn-book for an eighteenth-century meeting-house, covering practically all requirements and occasions.

But in addition to this architectonic genius, Watts, through the Short Essay and the prefaces to the Psalms and Hymns, was the originator of the first clearly-devised philosophy of Church Praise in the English Language, as well as the author of a few hymns and psalm versions that are never likely to be surpassed.²² Lastly, add to all this the fact that his Psalmodic Reform was the work of one man, and a young one, and was made acceptable to part, at least, of the Christian Church during his life time, despite criticism and ostracism under the heavy hand of custom, and you will perceive where the genius of Isaac Watts lies, and why he is acclaimed as the father and pioneer of the modern English Hymn.²³

Louis F. Benson, the American hymnological scholar, was the first writer to mention the scheme and structure of Watts' work as a whole. And Arthur Paul Davis, another transatlantic scholar, in the short and disappointing chapter on Hymnody in his recent biography of Watts - a book so excellent in other respects - merely follows Benson's lead in this regard.²⁴ Both writers discern in the corpus of Watts' work (i.e., in the Hymns (1707 and 9), Divine Songs (1715), and the Psalms (1719)), an attempt to provide a complete System of Praise. The concept is useful to the student of Watts as long as it is interpreted in an organic and not a mechanistic sense. It is not true, for example, that Watts out of response to particular circumstances and/

and needs provided three departments of praise, - Psalms and Hymns and Children's Songs - and then fitted them together into a system. It is nearer the truth to say that in his earliest book of verse, Horae Lyricae, 1705, the whole system of praise is found in embryo. There is hardly anything in his later hymnological work that is not present in nuce in that first book of poems and psalm and hymn experiments. The entire body of Watts' work from the Lyrics (1705) to the Psalms of David (1719), presents the student with a ZUSAMMENHANG - or, to use Pauline imagery, with an organic system of praise in which all the parts are "fitly joined together". Accordingly, Watts' work in hymnody, as was said in the opening chapter, follows an evolutionary process, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear", - a process in which every blossoming rod is present from the beginning, and needs only the proper stimulus of history and circumstance to quicken and ripen it to its required growth.

A last word. It was because Watts' work was received by the Nonconformist Churches of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as a fixed and authoritative system of praise, that the urge toward new hymnological effort was stifled; and Watts' Psalms and Hymns exercised a tyranny almost comparable to that of the traditional metrical Psalter. We have said on more than one occasion that Watts never envisaged such a situation, nor would he indeed have encouraged an attitude that so manifestly quenches the/

the Spirit of God. He regarded the System of Praise that he had begun as an ever growing organism, as a tree of life planted in the courts of the Church, its roots deep down in the soil of the Bible, but its branches every year embracing more and more of the life beneath, and its fruit becoming richer and more satisfying to the taste, through human skill with the pruning knife or the grafting tool.

NOTES

CHAPTER 9

- ¹ Arthur Paul Davis, Isaac Watts his Life and Works, p.183.
- ² These quotations are all taken from the section from A Guide to Prayer given in the Appendix, p. 40.
- ³ Louis F. Benson, The English Hymn....., 1915, p.52.
- ⁴ Fletcher's Psalm 130 shows in its closing verse a very early tendency to "Christianize" the Psalter;

Wait, ye saints, wait on our Lord;
 For from His tongue sweet mercy flows:
 Wait on His cross, wait on His word;
 Upon that tree Redemption grows.
 He will redeem
 His Israel
 From sin and wrath,
 From death and Hell.

In Parker's Psalter before each psalm comes the argument in verse, in which the Christological or prophetic meaning of the psalm is mentioned. Some of the Psalms themselves are Christianised, cf. Psalm 110, v.1:

The Lord most hye, the Father, thus
 Dyd say to Christ, my Lord, his Sonne, -
 Set thou in power most glorious
 On my right hand above the sunne;
 Until I make thy foes even all
 Thy low footstool, to thee to fall
 As subiectes thrall.

William Hunnis, a gentleman of the Royal Chapel under Edward VI, and afterwards chapel-master to Queen Elizabeth. See his version/

version of Psalm VI. in Certayne Psalms drawn forth into English Metre, 1550:

Vouchsafe therefore, I thee beseech,
On me some mercie take,
And turne thy wrath from me awaie,
For Jesus Christe's sake, etc.

Cf. Chapter 3 above, for other references to the work of Hunnis.

6

Luke Milbourne, 1649-1720, Rector of St. Ethelburga's, Bishopsgate. His version of the Psalms was published in 1698. Some of the compositions are Christianised. Cf. Psalm 8:

When I survey the never-resting skies,
Whose moving arch Thy curious fingers spread,
When to the changing moon I raise my eyes,
The stars with inexhausted brightness fed
Lord, what's poor man.....
Yet God, for our loved sakes, our nature took
Beneath Himself, beneath his angels found, etc.

Psalm 119, opens boldly with,

Christ reigns.....

Psalm 95, has

To bless the world's Incarnate King,

Charles Darby, Rector of Kedington in Suffolk, published a version of the Psalms in 1704, which Watts mentions as containing evangelical features.

6

Mason's Song XXX in Songs of Praise is a Christianized version of Psalm 139.

7

No writer on Psalmody, as far as we have been able to trace, has mentioned the evangelical features of the Old Version in its early editions. In addition to the nucleus of hymns, mentioned in Chapter 3, there were christianised elements in the text of the Psalms themselves:

Psalm 2/

Psalm 2, v.13:-

Oh then all they that trust in Christ
shall happy be and blest.

Psalm 15, v.7 in which the last line is unwittingly
christianized:

Who so doth all things as you see,
that here is to be done,
Shall never perish in this world,
Nor in the world to come.

Psalm 28, v.8:

He is our strength and our defence,
Our enemies to resist:
The health and the salvation,
Of his elect by Christ.

Psalm 75. Notice Gloria Patri at the end.

Psalm 125 (Another Version):

Their faith is sure firme to endure,
Grounded on Christ the corner stone.

Later in the same Psalm, we have:

O Lord doe good to Christians all,
That stedfast in thy word abide.

and again,

Glory to God the Father of might,
And to his sonne our Saviour,
And to the holy Ghost whose light,
Shine in our hearts and us succour.

This Psalm might have been in the Psalter used in Watts' time.

Samuel Wesley in his version of Psalm 117 writes:-

To him who reigns enthron'd on high,
To his dear Son who deign'd to die
Our Guilt and Errors to remove:
To that bless'd Spirit who Grace imparts,
And rules in all believing Hearts,
Be endless Glory, Praise and Love.

- 8 Cf. Chapters 5 and 6 above and the Appendix, pp. 105-127.
for a complete list of the subjects of Watts'
Psalm Imitations.
- 9 Cf. Hymns and Spiritual Songs, Bk.2, 92.
- 10 Cf. this chapter immediately below for quotations from Tate
and Brady.
Cf. A Paraphrase upon the Psalms of David By Sam. Woodford, 1667.
Preface:
"The XXI and LXXII (Psalms) I have with very little
straining of the Text brought down to our times, and
without offence to any, I hope, in the first parallel'd
his Majesties sufferings with those of David; in the
other the Happiness and Glory of his Kingdom with that
of Solomon....etc."
- 11 Cf. John Ker, The Psalms in History and Biography, 1886, p.203.
- 12 Cf. Henry Housman, John Ellerton his Life and Writings on
Hymnology, pp.234, 291.
- 13 In his latin verses addressed To The Rev. Mr. John Pinhorne, the
faithful praeceptor of my boyhood years, 1694, Watts speaks
in stanza iii. of Buchanan and Casimire.
- 14 We have found no less than 50 allusions to this theme after
a very desultory glance through the Daily Prayers and Liturgy
of the Orthodox Greek Church. These are found mostly in the
Hymns of the Resurrection. For example, take this from
Apolytikion of the Resurrection:
When Thou, the Living, the Immortal, wentest
down unto death, Thou didst slay Hades by the
lightning of the Divinity; but when Thou didst
also raise the dead from beneath the earth,
all the Powers of the Heavens shouted: O Christ
our God, the Life-giver, Glory to Thee.
- 15 Cf. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, The Greek Christian Poets....,
1863, p.49.

- 16 Cf. Prefaces to Horae Lyricae, first and second editions.
- 17 Edwin Paxton Hood, Vignettes of the Great Revival of the Eighteenth Century. 1887. pp.20-1.
- 18 Studies of a Biographer, vol.2. pp.39-42.
- 19 Arthur Paul Davis, op. cit., p.41.
- 20 Julian, op. cit., p.392.
- 21 Millar Patrick, The Story of the Church's Song, 1927, p.132.
- 22 An Analysis of the contents of 52 Anglican Hymn-Books, which gives an account of the 325 "standard hymns of the highest merit according to the verdict of the whole Anglican Church," accords first rank position to:

When I survey the wondrous Cross
 Our God our Help in Ages past
 Come let us joyn our chearful Songs
 Jesus shall reign where'er the Sun
 How bright these glorious Spirits shine
 There is a Land of pure delight
 Lord of the Worlds above
 Before Jehovah's awful Throne.

second rank to:

How beautious are their Feet
 From all that dwell below the Skies
 Come Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove
 Not all the Blood of Beasts
 Sweet is the Work my God, my King
 Salvation! O the joyful Sound
 This is the Day the Lord hath made.

and third rank to:

Come, we that love the Lord
 We give immortal Praise
 When I can read my Title clear
 With Joy we meditate the Grace
 Joy to the World, the Lord is come
 My God, how endless is thy Love

A fastidious Collection of Hymns like The Oxford Hymn Book, (1908), which includes only hymns that unite simplicity, directness and genuine religious feeling finds room for the following pieces by Watts:

Behold the morning sun
 Christ hath a garden walled around
 God of the morning, at whose voice
 Lo, what a glorious sight appears
 My God, my King, thy various praise
 To God the only wise

23

Even an Anglican High Church hymnological scholar gives the palm to Watts:

"(Watts was) the first great writer of English hymns who has left a large legacy to modern books.

He was the creator of the modern English hymn; which is neither an Office Hymn like Wither's or Ken's or Austin's, nor yet a metrical psalm, nor again a close paraphrase of Scripture, but a new species, evolved from the last named, and acquiring in the process a novel liberty of treatment and a balanced artistic form. Watts arrived at this new standpoint with the rapidity of genius, etc."

(Frere, Historical Edition of Hymns Ancient and Modern, 1909, p.LXXXIII.)

24

Cf. Arthur Paul Davis, op. cit.

Watts' importance is narrowed now chiefly to the hymns, and it is unfortunate that it is just here that we are disappointed. The facts are stated - the facts of his conscious initiative in the writing and singing of hymns - but these are too bare of themselves. It is very surprising to find no reference at all to Bernard Manning's well-known essay.

POSTSCRIPT

It remains to point out a few things off the main road of Watts' hymnology but by no means unrelated to it.

First, Watts' treatment of the Psalms initiated an attitude to the Hebrew Psalter by later versionists which was not always a gain to the Church. Many of them followed his example of liberty far too freely. The spirit of the Old Testament book was sacrificed to doctrine, rather than enlarged in the light of the Gospel. 'David' was exploited in turn by Calvinist, Arminian, Methodist and Presbyterian in ways that make the reader stand aghast. Watts' own version sometimes deserves John Ker's criticism -

"a graft of the Apostle Paul on David, which is not very successful, as it becomes a kind of metrical commentary with the old and new in perplexing conjunction".

But that was not the Scottish thinker's last word. He also says,

"Some of the renderings...have taken a place in Christian psalmody...Watts rose much higher when he took another method. He was the first to open that stream of sacred song which was swelled by the Wesleys, Cowper, and many more, and which has refreshed and strengthened Christian feeling among all branches of the Church".¹

That is praise enough from a great Scot who was naturally a lover of/
of/

¹ The Psalms in History and Biography, p.203.

of the metrical psalms.

For all its failings (and faults are expected in a pioneering venture!) Watts' Christianized Psalter in conception and execution was a work of genius. Coleridge wrote in his Table Talk, under June 1, 1830:

"I exceedingly regret that our church pays so little attention to the subject of congregational singing. See how it is! In that particular part of the public worship in which, more than in all the rest, the common people might, and ought to, join, - which by its association with music, is meant to give a fitting vent and expression to the emotions, - in that part we all sing as Jews; or, at best, as mere men, in the abstract, without a Saviour. You know my veneration for the Book of Psalms, or most of it; but with some half a dozen exceptions, the Psalms are surely not adequate vehicles of Christian thanksgiving and joy!"

Yes, that was heterodox in the Church of England as late as 1830. But it is hard to imagine that a man with the erudition of Coleridge should have been ignorant that it was Isaac Watts who set about to reform this state of things. Unless this item in the Table Talk was inaccurately recorded he undoubtedly was ignorant, for he adds,

"Upon this deficiency in our service, Wesley and Whitfield seized..."^a

Close on a century and a half before Coleridge wrote that young Isaac Watts had felt very keenly the deficiencies in the Hebrew Psalms in Christian worship, and had set about to correct them. And since Coleridge's day the Anglican Church has had its hymnologists - men like Ellerton, Julian, Frere, Dearmer, Phillips and Fox. - who have had/

^a Table Talk, 2nd ed., 1836, p.86.

had to acclaim, sometimes in the teeth of prejudice, the achievements of the Nonconformist father of hymnody.

We have said that Watts was really the child of Calvinistic Puritanism. Even his revolutionary ideas about public worship have their source in Calvin, rather than in Luther. But Watts recognised, individualist as he was, that his great master had a liturgical blind-spot. John Calvin's rigid adherence to the Psalms of David in worship was an historical and psychological error. A French writer has recently reminded us of Calvin's mistake, and its disastrous influence on the Reformed psalmody, especially in France:

"....les consequences liturgiques que Calvin a tirées du principe bibliciste en envisageant le psautier israélite comme le chant sacré qui Dieu lui-même aurait mis dans la bouche de l'Eglise chrétienne, reposent sur une erreur. Ce n'est qu'un manque de sens historique qui a pu cacher à la pensée abstraite du réformateur de Genève le fait que le recueil des psaumes est un livre pré-chrétien, contenant l'Evangile du Christ tout au plus en état de germe. Aussi, l'Eglise primitive, pour chanter la gloire de Dieu, a-t-elle très tôt ajouté à la poésie théocentrique des psaumes l'hymne christocentrique, pour arriver finalement à l'établissement de l'année ecclésiastique".

(Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses 1940. No.1-2, p.79. footnote).

Before the Reformation the Psalter had been in some sense baptised into the spirit of Christianity by being set in an evangelical and ecclesiastical framework. By a system of Antiphons and Invitatories the Hebrew Psalms were related to the seasons of the Christian Year. The/

The Antiphon was the intercalation of some fragment or verse between the verses of the Psalm that was being sung; one choir taking the Psalm, the other the Antiphon. Sometimes the Antiphons were taken from the Psalm itself, but often from other sources. For example, in the recitation of the 2nd Psalm, the antiphon, "The Lord said: Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee" would be used. In this way enrichment and emphasis was given to a Psalm of Messianic Sonship by the twelvefold repetition of these words. Similarly, an evangelical character was given to Psalm 21 by the intercalation at the end of every verse of the words, "Blessed art Thou, O Christ, our God".

The Invitatory was a modification of the Antiphon. The words, "O come let us worship!" for example, were repeated nine times during the recitation of the 95th Psalm. These Antiphons and Invitatories varied with the feasts of the Church's Year, so that an Easter character might be given^{to} a Psalm through the Antiphon, "The Lord hath risen indeed; Alleluia!", or an Advent character by the repetition of "The King, the Lord cometh". So the same Psalm could be recited with different feelings and frames of thought, according to the evangelic emphases.³ But it was the same shaft of light from the Holy Spirit that rested at all times on the same words, "but the prism of the Church separated that colourless light into its component rays; into the violet of penitence, the crimson of martyrdom, and the gold of the highest seasons of Christian gladness".

Now/

³ Cf. John D. Chambers, The Psalter..of Church of Sarum, 1852.

Now Calvin believed that 'the prism of the Church' had often stained the white radiance of the Holy Spirit's light that irradiated the Hebrew Psalter; and therefore he allowed no ecclesiastical meaning to be mixed with the inspired text of the Psalms. The result was a dichotomy in reformed worship. In preaching and prayer, Christ and His Cross were at the centre of the worshipper's thought, but when he sang his praises, it was as if Christ had never been born, had never died and ^{risen} rose again from the dead. Liturgically the Reformed Church, because of Calvin's ruthless bibliolatry and historical blindness, was a house divided against itself. It was as if the worshippers gathered for prayers, Scripture reading and sermon within the Christian Church, and then withdrew to the annex of the Synagogue at the time of singing. Watts removed the annex, and built again the structure of Christian worship on more symmetrical lines. But being a wise builder, he used the bricks and carved masonry of the beautiful annex, and built them into the new building.

John Ker has said rightly in his fascinating little book, The Psalms in History and Biography, page 198, that

"The flame that is caught from a hymn is more secure when its heart rests on the white heat which gathers round a psalm".

It was because nineteenth-century hymnody often forgot that truth that men of the spiritual stature of Fairbairn were heard crying out:

"I am grateful that my childhood was nurtured on the Book of Psalms rather than on the jingling verses that celebrate the 'sweet Saviour' or protest how I love 'my Jesus'".⁴

⁴ Studies in Religion and Theology, p.272.

Kingsley speaks of popular hymns of his day with an unhealthy view of the natural world, bearing about with them the mustiness of the monastic theory of the earth being the devil's planet. And he contrasts this Manichaeian spirit of modern hymnody with the healthy naturalism of the Psalter.⁵ Dale talks of hymn-books commonly used in the Church,

"in which large numbers of the hymns are so chilly, that if you put a thermometer into (them), the mercury sinks many degrees below zero. Cold hymns... will encourage a cold and heartless religion." ⁶

In another place he refers to hymns that "fondle Christ".

Watts at his best steers clear of these rocks and sirens that are the undoing of the 'popular' hymn-writer. There was in his make-up, to be sure, a mystical streak, a monkishness almost, a leaning towards 'luscious theology'; but he was saved from these when he kept close to the Hebrew Psalms.

John Ker thinks that the value of the Hebrew Psalm to the hymn-writer is that it

"corrects the hymn on the side in which it sometimes errs, and when sentiment becomes morbid and fancy superficial, it leads the soul into the depths of its own nature, and gives it for its strength the very words of God". (Ibid, p.197).

The Psalter has two such corrective qualities that make it the best/

⁵ Charles Kingsley: his Letters and Memories, vo.2,256.

⁶ Nine Lectures on Preaching, p.279

best foundation for the evangelical hymnist to work upon. First, it combines universality and individuality. It is the resultant 'catholic inwardness' of the Book of Psalms that makes it the best pattern for the congregational hymn. To realise catholicity without vagueness, and intensity of personal feeling without the narrowness of personal limitations, and to combine these qualities for use both in public and in private worship, alike for purposes of prayer and praise - that is the distinction of the Psalms. Secondly, the Psalms are Theocentric even when they are most intimately human. The weakness of many hymns is that they are either "an ode to self", or an assertion of self disguised in religious language". Benjamin Jowett had this type of hymn in mind when he once said:

"How cocky they are,

'When upward I fly
Quite justified I',

Who can say such a thing as that?" No hymn-writer will write in that strain if he makes the Book of Psalms his model: to have in memory the Hebrew standard of sacred song is to keep hymnody safe from the canker of the false and flimsy.

The objectivity of the Hebrew Psalms did two things for Watts as a writer of hymns: it kept before him the awe-inspiring vision of the holy and everlasting God with whom the soul of man has "vast concerns", and it made him see Jesus in terms of God. Watts was thus saved from Pantheism or Deism on the one hand, and a saccharine species of Jesuolatry on the other - two common faults in/

in modern hymnody cut loose from the Bible.

Louis Coutier Biggs in his annotated edition of Hymns Ancient and Modern, 1867, page IX, thinks that a hymn-book

"....can scarcely be the compilation, it can never be the composition of an individual.....
It must be truly Catholic in spirit, embracing impartially things new and old, translations of the hymns of all Churches...."

Every modern hymn-book committee would endorse Biggs' view. But Watts had little choice of sources when he set about his pioneer labours. The surprising thing is that, with hardly any predecessors and any clear pattern of what a hymn should be, he achieved so many great psalm imitations and hymns. And much of his work has the note of catholicity just because it is the re-echo of the Scripture. Ofcourse, Watts wrote too much and, in spite of a fine faculty for literary criticism, he sometimes lacked the capacity for self-criticism. Often in the interest of theory he wrote down, and too far down, to the level of the "vulgar Christian". And on occasions he underestimated the aesthetic potentialities of lowly worshippers. And like Wordsworth, some of his best work was done when he forgot theory, and wrote from his warm and kindly heart. Sometimes, to be sure, he was capable of bad taste, of banal expressions and poor rhymes; and much of his work can have little else today but historical interest to the student of English hymnology. But at his best, Watts is unapproachable. Besides the really great paraphrases and hymns which we have mentioned, there are others good only in parts, and very many verses abounding with unforgettable images and memorable/

memorable lines.

John Ellerton⁷ in his hymnological writings laments the fact that the seventeenth century, the age of great poetry and theology, bequeathed so little to the worship-song of the Church. That is not true. In the hymnody of Watts elements of that age of art and faith are found. Some of the hymns echo its poetry. Many reflect its experience. There is perhaps in Watts' verse too much of its Memento Mori. But in a sense this was a salutary feature: Watts' preoccupation with the seventeenth-century themes of Death and the Last Things did bring over into the over-confident Age of Reason a sense of an "accepted hell beneath". Via the verse of Watts the note of melancholy and tragedy entered English literature, mainly perhaps in the work of Blair and Young. Night Thoughts seems to us to be full of thoughts and images from the Psalms and Hymns.

Watts' hymnody also carried forward some of the great theological ideas of the seventeenth and earlier centuries. Apart from its mystical strain, there is in it the Nuptial theology of Canticles, and the Christus Victor idea of the Atonement. While it is true that Watts' work mirrors the theology of Calvin, the hymnist's is a milder and more gentle species of Calvinism; and every now and again softer rays from another type of theology, having affiliations with seventeenth-century Anglicanism and even with the Mediaeval Church, fall like a benediction upon the pages of the Psalms and Hymns.

George/

⁷ John Ellerton....., by Henry Housman, p.199.

George Burder in the preface to his Collection of Hymns....
intended as a Supplement to Dr. Watts' Psalms and Hymns, published
 at the close of the eighteenth century, writes:

"The praise of those incomparable works (i.e., Watts' Psalms and Hymns) has long been great in the British Churches, and will probably continue so to be, while any relish for evangelical truth, or experimental religion, remains. Indeed, a considerable part of them have become useless, not to say obnoxious, in those congregations where the new scheme has been adopted, or Arian and Socinian heresies imbibed. For the doctrines of Man's apostacy from God - the Atonement and Righteousness of Christ - the proper Divinity of our Saviour, and the work of Jehovah the Spirit, are uniformly maintained in them; though disdained and exploded by a set of men in this day, who arrogantly assume the title of Rational Dissenters".

The passage reflects the theological and historical importance of Watts' hymnology. Whatever views Watts came to hold in his old age, there can be little question that his Psalms and Hymns, on the whole, conserved and passed on the theology and spiritual experience of an age of faith. They became the religious text-book of the gathered churches of independency; and it is very certain that those who mastered it would have a fullness and definiteness of religious and ethical thought which are not very common today amongst the members of our churches. There can be no surprise, therefore, that at a time when the Psalm-singing, disorganised Presbyterian/

Presbyterian Church of England largely became Unitarian, the gathered communities of Independency, using the sung-liturgy provided for them by Isaac Watts, kept the Faith.⁸ To be confronted in home and Church with classical doctrine, as these congregational fellowships were, was of the greatest value in a time of theological flux and religious declension.

The churches that adopted Watts' psalmody naturally benefited most from the heavenly wind of the Evangelical Revival.

⁸ Cf. Congregationalism through the Centuries, p.69-72.
James Moffat, The Presbyterian Churches, pp.68-9.

ORIGINAL EDITIONS OF WATTS'S WORKS CONSULTED

Horae Lyricae./ Poems,/ Chiefly of the Lyric kind./
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11/ Odes, Elegys, etc. to Vertue/ Loyalty and Friendship./
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by S. and D. Bridge, for John Lawrence at / the Sign of
the Angel in the Poultrey. MDCCVI.

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of the Dead./ by I. Watts./ The Second Edition, Altered
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Printed by J. Humfreys, for N. Cliff, at the Golden
Candlestick, the Lower End of Cheapside, near/
Mercers - Chappel. 1709.

A/ Sermon/ Preached at Salters-Hall/ To the Societies/
for/ Reformation of Manners,/ in the / Cities of London
and Westminster/ October 6th., 1707 / By I. Watts/
Published at their Request/ London/ Printed by J. Humfreys,
for John Lawrence/ at the Angel in the Poultrey. 1707.

Hymns / and / Spiritual Songs./ In Three Books./
1. Collected from the Scriptures./ ii. Compos'd on
Divine Subjects./ iii. Prepared for the Lord's Supper./
With an Essay / Towards the Improvement of Chri -/ stian
Psalmody, by the Use of E-/ vangelical Hymns in Worship,
as / well as the Psalms of David./ By I. Watts./ 6 lines
of quotations / London,/ Printed by J. Humfreys, for
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London: / Printed for M.Lawrence at the Angel/in the
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The/ Psalms/ of / David/ Imitated in the Language of the/
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Printed for J.Clark, at the Bible and Crown / in the Poultry;
R.Ford, at the Angel in the / Poultry; R. Cruttenden, at
the / Bible and Three Crowns in Cheapside. 1719.

Sermons / on / Various Subjects;/ viz /I.,II.,III.,
The Inward Witness of Christianity./ IV.Flesh and Spirit;
Sin and Holiness./ V.Drawing nigh to God in Prayer./
VI.Sins and Sorrows spread before God./VII. VIII. A Lovely
Youth perishing in Sin./ IX. X. The Hidden Life of a
Christian./ XI. Nearness to God the Felicity of Creatures./
XII. The Scale of Blessedness; or, the Blessed Saints,/
Blessed Saviour, and Blessed Trinity./ XIII. XIV. Appearing
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Expe- / rience, and the Future State, are set in / a fair
and easy Light/ Together with / a Sacred Hymn annexed to
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